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THE GOLDSMITH'S WIFE.

A Tale.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH,

AUTHOR OF

"PRESTON FIGHT," "BOSCOBEL," "MANCHESTER REBELS," "TOWER OF LONDON," "OLD SAINT PAUL'S," &c. &c. &c.

I met her as returning
In solemn penance from the public cross.
Submissive, sad, and lowly was her look;
A burning taper in her hand she bore,
Her streaming eyes bent ever on the earth,
Except when in some bitter pang of sorrow,
To heaven she seemed in fervent zeal to raise them,
And beg that mercy man denied her here.

ROWE. *Jane Shore.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE GOLDSMITH'S WIFE.

Book the Second.

[CONTINUED.]

THE EXPEDITION TO FRANCE.

X.

HOW TWO SPLENDID LADIES' DRESSES WERE SENT BY KING LOUIS AS A PRESENT TO ISIDORE AND CLAUDE.

ISIDORE's first business was to write the letter agreed upon to King Edward ; and, having sealed it, he sent for Cyriac, to whom he entrusted it, enjoining him to deliver it into the king's own hands.

Cyriac, who had already received a safe-conduct, promised to execute his mission faithfully.

“No mishance, I trust, will happen to

thee," said Isidore ; " but shouldst thou fall into the Duke of Burgundy's hands, destroy the letter, and answer no questions touching thine errand."

" Fear not ; I will say nothing, even if I be put to the torture," rejoined Cyriac.

" Shouldst thou reach the king in safety," pursued Isidore, " tell his majesty that all has gone well, and that I have come to a satisfactory understanding with King Louis. Add that my return is uncertain, but his majesty need have no anxiety about me."

Cyriac then departed, and shortly afterwards set out. He met with no interruption, at first, on his journey, but before reaching Peronne, he encountered the Sire de Sainville, with a party of soldiers, in the service of the Constable Saint Pol.

De Sainville showed no respect for his

safe-conduct, but, thinking something might be made of him, took him to Saint Quentin.

Brought before the constable, Cyriac was sharply questioned, but refused to disclose his errand, though threatened with the halter.

Unluckily, however, the letter which he had no opportunity of destroying, was found upon him; and this, though containing only a few words, satisfied the constable that a negotiation was going on between Edward and the King of France.

On making this important discovery, he clapped the unlucky messenger in prison, and set himself to consider how the affair could be best turned to his own advantage. After much deliberation, he resolved to warn the Duke of Burgundy; but as the

duke was now with Edward, he could not, for the present, communicate with him.

Leaving this double-dealing personage to arrange his schemes, we will return to Compiègne, and see what had happened to Isidore.

If the young esquire had been a noble of the highest rank, greater attention could not have been paid him than he received from the wily monarch.

Everything that could be devised in so dull a court as that of Louis, was done for his amusement. Various sports and diversions were provided for him, and he was taken by the king to hunt in the park and the forest; and Louis and the courtiers appeared delighted with his skill. On all occasions he was attended by Claude. Several entertainments were given by the

king, at which he appeared as a distinguished guest.

One morning, Claude came into his chamber before he had risen, and laughing heartily, said :

“ What think you the king has sent ? ”

“ Nay, I cannot guess,” replied Isidore.

“ Two splendid ladies’ dresses,” replied Claude ; “ one of cloth of velvet, evidently intended for you, and the other of figured satin, which, I suppose, must be meant for me.”

“ Let me look at them ! ” cried Isidore, springing from the couch, and putting on a loose robe.

Exclamations of wonder and delight followed, when the dresses were brought in by Claude, and after they had been sufficiently admired, Isidore was easily pre-

vailed upon to try the effect of the velvet costume.

Not satisfied with a mere trial of the gown, Claude insisted that the whole dress should be put on; and when the toilette was completed, Isidore stepped into the adjoining saloon, where there was a large mirror, to see the effect of the transformation.

The change, indeed, was magical. The handsome esquire had become a most beautiful woman.

Isidore was still standing in front of the glass, attended by Claude, who was arranging the dress with all the nicety and skill of a female hand, when sounds of laughter warned them that other persons were present; and turning, they perceived the king.

Louis had entered without being announced, accompanied by the Sire de Comines.

For a moment, he seemed lost in admiration of the lovely woman he beheld ; while, on her part, Jane—for she it was—exhibited some little confusion at being thus discovered.

Claude, however, did not seem at all embarrassed, and, perhaps, might have been an agent in the plot.

“ Pardon me, fair lady,” said Louis, advancing. “ I had all along suspected that the handsome young esquire sent to me by the King of England was no other than the lovely Mistress Shore, and I had, therefore, recourse to this stratagem to elicit the truth.”

Having now recovered her composure, Jane made a graceful reverence to the king, and said, “ Since the secret has been discovered, it would be idle to attempt to preserve my *incognita*; but I beseech your majesty to believe that no disrespect has been intended to you by King Edward. He consented very reluctantly to send me.”

“ *Pâques-Dieu!* I am right glad he *did* send you!” cried Louis. “ No other envoy could have pleased me better, or served him so well. By Saint Denis!” he continued, gazing at her with increased admiration, “ I marvel not that my good cousin has been enslaved by so much beauty. Such charms are more than mortal could resist—especially in mortal so inflammable as King Edward.”

“ I have always understood that King

Louis never condescended to flatter," remarked Jane.

"Truth sometimes sounds like flattery," rejoined Louis. "And in good sooth it would be impossible to flatter Mistress Shore. But come and sit by me, madame. I have something to say to you."

And he led her to a sofa, while the others retired to a short distance.

"Pray consider me an old friend, madame," he said, in a wheedling tone, "and speak to me as freely as you would to King Edward. I should like you to carry away an agreeable impression of your visit to Compiègne."

"I cannot fail to do that, sire, having experienced so much kindness from your majesty."

"Poh! I have done nothing," said Louis;

“nothing, at least, in comparison with what I will do. Say the word, and I will make you a countess.”

“I have really no desire for rank, sire, or my wish would have been already gratified.”

“It shall be no barren title,” said Louis.
“You shall have a large revenue.”

“I have more money than I need, sire,” she rejoined.

“*Comment! diantre!*” exclaimed Louis, in surprise. “You are the first of your sex I have met with who has refused honours and wealth.”

“Friendship is not to be bought, sire,” she remarked.

“How, then, can yours be won?” he cried, regarding her fixedly. “Are you

willing to exchange the Court of England for that of France?"

"No, sire," she replied, firmly. "I will never quit King Edward."

A strange smile played upon Louis's cynical features, as he observed :

"Your king is reputed to be inconstant."

"All men are inconstant, sire," she rejoined. "I do not expect a paragon. But King Edward is the best of men."

"No one can esteem all his noble qualities more highly than myself," said Louis. "But he has many advisers who are inimical to me, and I should like, therefore, to have a friend near him."

"I will gladly serve your majesty, if I can do so without prejudice to King Edward's interests."

“That is all I can ask,” said Louis. “One point was touched upon in our previous discussion,” he added, in a far more serious tone than he had hitherto assumed; “but I am sure I shall have all the aid you can render in the matter. There is an illustrious prisoner in the Tower of London, whose liberation I would fain accomplish. ’Twould be treason to aid her escape; but I am sure you feel pity for her.”

“You allude to Margaret of Anjou, sire. My sympathies are with the House of York; but I do pity the unfortunate queen from the bottom of my heart. Could I open her prison door, she should be free at once. These may be treasonable sentiments, but I have uttered them to King Edward, and he has not reproved me. You misjudge him,

sire, if you suppose he is insensible to the sorrows of that bereaved wife and mother."

"Nevertheless, he will not set her free without a heavy ransom," said Louis. "That ransom I am prepared to pay. The unhappy queen's father, the good King René, is willing to make a sacrifice of part of Provence, to procure his daughter's liberation from captivity. I will advance the money, and if King Edward's demands are not too exorbitant, Queen Margaret will be set free."

"What sum are you willing to pay for the queen's liberation, sire?" asked Jane.

"Fifty thousand crowns," replied Louis. "The offer is from King Réne, not from me."

"If I have any influence with King Ed-

ward, no greater demand shall be made," said Jane.

"I place the matter in your hands," said Louis. "It may be that the poor widowed queen may owe her liberty to you."

"Ah! if I could only hope so!" exclaimed Jane.

"'Tis somewhat strange that no answer has been received from King Edward," observed Louis. "Our messenger, I trust, has not fallen into the hands of the Duke of Burgundy, or been detained by the Constable Saint Pol. My provost-marshal, Tristan, shall take a small troop of horse to Noyon, to make inquiries about him. To-morrow, or next day, I shall go to Amiens, and I must pray you, fair lady, to bear me company, unless we hear from King Edward in the interim. Of course,

you can resume your disguise, if you think proper."

"I thank your majesty," she replied. "It is not my intention to abandon it until I have done with camps, and return to England. Had I not adopted that costume, I could not have accompanied King Edward."

"And if you had been left behind, I should have been the greatest loser, since I should not have had the pleasure of receiving the fairest of her sex at Compiègne."

As he spoke, he raised her hand to his lips, with an air of gallantry, and quitted the *salon* with De Comines.

No sooner were they gone, than Jane's attendant, who, it is scarcely necessary to

explain, was no other than Alicia, habited as a page, began to laugh very heartily.

“I would not have a more diverting sight than I have just witnessed,” she cried.

“I am certain you have captivated King Louis. A truce will be impossible if things go on thus. King Edward will have to continue the war to get you back again.”

Jane tried to look grave, but failed. “Come and help me to change my dress,” she said. “I have become so accustomed to the ease and freedom of male attire, that I cannot bear a gown.”

XI.

HOW LOUIS THE ELEVENTH HUNTED THE WILD BOAR IN
THE FOREST OF COMPIEGNE.

HALF an hour afterwards, Jane reappeared as the young esquire Isidore, and, followed by the supposed page Claude, descended to the court-yard of the palace.

They were just in time to see the redoubted provost-marshall start on his expedition. A terrible personage was Tristan l'Hermite. Not a trace of feeling could be discerned in his inflexible countenance. No

smile ever parted his thin, tightly-compressed lips.

Armed in a coat of mail, over which he wore a surcoat with large loose sleeves, Tristan had a huge two-handed sword attached to his girdle. Ordinarily, he was attended by a couple of ill-favoured varlets, provided with halters; nor were they absent on the present occasion, as their aid might be needed.

The provost-marshal had brought his horse close up to the king, who was stationed on a flight of steps. Having received his instructions, Tristan bent respectfully and departed, accompanied by a small detachment of archers, among whom were the two executioners before mentioned.

As soon as he was gone, Louis called for horses and hounds, and noticing the young

esquire amid the assemblage of courtiers, invited him to join the chase, telling him the day's sport would commence with a boar hunt. Isidore could not have refused; but, in sooth, he was very curious to see the royal pastime promised him.

Shortly afterwards, a large party of nobles and gentlemen, all well mounted and armed for the boar hunt, set forth from the palace, headed by the king.

In preparation for the boar hunt, Louis was accoutred in doublet and hose of coarse grey cloth, fitting close to the limbs.

A short two-edged sword hung from his girdle, and, like all his attendants, he was furnished with a sharp boar-spear. A boar-spear was likewise given to Isidore, but the king laughingly told him he would not have to use it.

In close attendance upon the king were three huntsmen, each of whom had in slip a couple of large and powerful hounds, having leather coats fastened round the body, to protect them from the boar's tusks—a very inadequate defence, as it turned out.

Thus attended, and taking care Isidore should not be far from him, Louis rode into the depths of the forest.

The spot where the boar was lodged was marked by strong nets, hung from tree to tree. These toils served to imprison the savage beast in his lair; and while they were being removed, Louis counselled the young esquire to take up a position near some distant bushes which he pointed out, so that he could witness the sport without much risk.

Soon afterwards, the boar was uncouched,

and proved to be an animal of the largest size, and armed with tremendous tusks. Stalking forth very deliberately into the open space where the king and the nobles were grouped, he eyed the assemblage menacingly, and seemed singling out some one to attack.

A couple of hounds were now let slip, and, cheered by the huntsmen, they assailed the boar fiercely, striving to seize him by the head. But both were speedily shaken off. Despite his leathern coat, one was ripped up by the boar's merciless tusks, and the other disabled.

Having thus liberated himself from his assailants, the chafed animal turned upon the huntsmen nearest him, foined at them with his tusks, broke their spears, and put them to flight.

Delighted with the proofs thus afforded of the formidable brute's prodigious strength, Louis ordered the four remaining hounds to be unleashed, and cheered them on himself to the attack.

The conflict seemed unequal, but the boar comported himself well, and gained the applause of all the hunt, especially of the king, who was enraptured by his prowess.

At first, the advantage seemed with the hounds, but, ere long, two were laid sprawling on the ground, and the others were so much hurt that they could not hold the boar, who dashed off towards the bushes near which Isidore and his companion were posted.

Claude instantly galloped off, for it was clear that the infuriated beast meant to

attack them ; but Isidore displayed no alarm. Dexterously avoiding the boar's onslaught, he struck the fierce brute with his spear, but could not pierce his tough and bristly hide ; and this manœuvre was successfully repeated, until the king had time to come up with his attendants.

Seeing the young esquire's peril, Louis drew his sword, and, by a downward stroke, hamstrung the boar, causing the animal to sink on his haunches. Next moment, Isidore's spear, plunged under the shoulder, pierced the boar's heart.

“ By Saint Hubert ! a great feat ! ” cried Louis. “ You have slain the fiercest and largest boar in the forest.”

“ But for your majesty's aid, the boar would have slain me,” rejoined Isidore.

“ And then I should have borne the

blame of the mischance," said the king, "though I cautioned you to keep out of the way of danger. However, you have displayed great courage. The boar's head shall be yours, and you can send it to King Edward if you choose."

"His majesty would be astounded if he received such a present from me, sire," replied Isidore."

"*Pâques-Dieu!* we must not alarm him!" cried Louis; "nor shall you run any further risk. We will pursue a safer sport, in which you excel."

After this, no fewer than seven noble stags were slain, his majesty being always foremost in the chase. Nor was Isidore far behind. The young esquire rode so well, that he attracted general attention, and received warm commendation from Louis

himself. The last stag roused led them to the furthest extremity of the forest, where he was slaughtered by the king's own hand; and the party were riding slowly back, when they suddenly came upon an extraordinary scene.

XII.

HOW ISIDORE SAVED A CORDELIER FROM THE CORD.

In the centre of an open space, at the north side of the forest, grew an immense oak, with wide-spreading arms.

Underneath this mighty tree were stationed Tristan l'Hermite and his archers; and at the very moment when the royal hunting party approached the solitary spot, the provost-marshal was superintending the execution of certain prisoners he had taken.

Already three unhappy wretches, just strung up, were dangling overhead from the branches of the oak.

A fourth prisoner was kneeling upon the ground, with his hands clasped in prayer, awaiting a like fate. He was a cordelier, and his hood was thrown back, so as to display his features, which now wore the livid hue of death.

Near him stood the two caitiffs, watching for a sign from their leader to tie him to the fatal tree.

On beholding this scene, Louis pressed forward, not with any intention of staying the execution, but because he felt curious to know what offence the wretched culprits had committed.

Tristan, however, thought it best to get the job done, and talk afterwards. Accord-

ingly, he gave the word to his assistants, and in another moment all would have been over with the unfortunate cordelier, if Isidore had not come to his rescue. .

The young esquire, who was close behind the king, had recognised the features of the kneeling monk. The face was too well known ever to be forgotten. The recognition was mutual. But it was not a vindictive look that the cordelier fixed upon the esquire, nor was it supplicatory. It was rather a last farewell.

But, be it what it might, it touched Isidore to the quick ; and he exclaimed to the king, “Sire, you have promised me a boon. I now ask one from your majesty. Grant me the life of that man.”

Tristan heard the request, and glanced significantly at his royal master, to inti-

mate that the prisoner ought not to be spared.

“What has he done?” demanded Louis.

“Sire, he is a spy employed by the Duke of Burgundy,” replied Tristan.

“Impossible!” cried Isidore. “I know him. He is an Englishman.”

“He was taken with those men, who are Burgundians,” said Tristan, doggedly, determined not to relinquish his prey.

“I believe him to be a messenger from the King of England,” said Isidore, earnestly.

“It is true,” said the cordelier. “I so represented myself, but my assertion was not credited.”

“I had no proof of what the man stated, sire,” remarked Tristan, gruffly.

“Because my safe-conduct and letter of

credence had been taken from me by the Burgundians," cried the cordelier.

"If this monk be executed, King Edward will most assuredly require a strict account of his death," said Isidore. "An untoward occurrence at this juncture might be fraught with serious consequences."

"Since you take a personal interest in the prisoner, it is sufficient," said Louis. "Release him," he added, to Tristan.

Thereupon the cordelier was instantly set free, and prostrating himself before the king, thanked him for his gracious interposition in his behalf.

"Rise, father," cried Louis. "You have had a narrow escape. You should address your thanks to this young esquire, not to me. 'Tis to him you owe your life."

The cordelier bent his head, but spoke no word.

“Draw nearer,” said Louis. “If thou hast any message to me from the King of England, deliver it.”

“I have no message, sire,” replied the monk. “His majesty had become anxious for the safety of his envoy, and sent me to ascertain that all was well with him. I met with misadventures on the way, as you are aware, being captured by those Burgundian soldiers, and re-captured by your provost-marshall, who refused to listen to my explanation. All would have been over with me had not your majesty appeared so opportunely, and saved me; and I again thank you for my life, though it is scarcely worth preserving. My errand is fulfilled.

I can now report to my royal master that I have seen his envoy, and that he is well."

"Thou shalt have something more to report," said Louis. "But do I understand thee aright? Hath not Cyriac, the archer, arrived? He was despatched hence some days ago, with a missive to King Edward."

"No messenger had arrived, sire, when I departed; and King Edward, as I have said, had become uneasy. Cyriac, I doubt not, has been captured, for I learnt from the Burgundian soldiers that an English archer was in the hands of the Constable Saint Pol."

"Ha!" exclaimed Louis, angrily. "By Saint Denis! the constable shall regret his interference. But you must get back

quickly, and allay your royal master's fears respecting his envoy. Where is King Edward now?"

"Encamped near Peronne, sire," replied the monk.

"*Pâques-Dieu !* So near?" exclaimed Louis. "Then 'tis time we were at Amiens. Since my provost-marshall hath brought thee here, he shall escort thee back. Thou hearest, Tristan," he added, to that important officer.

"Find a horse instantly for this good friar, and conduct him as nigh as thou canst to Peronne."

"I will bring him within a league of the town," said the provost-marshall. "He must do the rest himself."

"Give him whatever gold thou hast about thee," pursued Louis.

Tristan slightly murmured at this injunction, and the cordelier hastened to say that he desired no reward.

“Stay a moment,” cried Louis, as if an idea had suddenly crossed him.

Then, turning to Isidore, he said, “I am very unwilling to part with you, but if you desire to return with this friar I will not hinder you.”

“I thank your majesty,” replied the young esquire; “but as I may have more to do, I will avail myself of your gracious invitation, and prolong my stay for a few days. Tell the king,” he added, to the cordelier, “that I am not a prisoner, but a highly-honoured guest of the King of France. Say that I have accomplished all I undertook. Say, further, that I could have returned with thee had I been so

minded, but for many reasons, which his majesty will understand, I deemed it best to remain here."

"I will repeat all that has been told me," rejoined the monk.

"Acquaint King Edward that to-morrow we proceed to Amiens," said Louis. "If his majesty desires to treat with me, and three days hence will send commissioners to the village of Corbie, near that town, I will send other commissioners to confer with them. You understand?"

"Perfectly, sire," replied the monk. "I will not fail to deliver your message."

While this was passing, Isidore gazed earnestly at the cordelier, but the latter sedulously avoided meeting his glance. Nor did he look at the young esquire as he withdrew.

Louis then rode on with his attendants to the palace, while Tristan, in obedience to his majesty's behests, escorted the friar on the road towards Peronne.

Late in the evening the cordelier arrived at the English camp, and was immediately taken to the royal pavilion. Edward was overjoyed to learn that Isidore was in safety, and was well satisfied with the message sent him by the French King.

Next day, as appointed, Louis set out for Amiens, taking Isidore with him. He was accompanied by a large retinue of nobles and knights, and guarded by five hundred men-at-arms. The inhabitants of the town received him with every demonstration of delight. The church bells were rung, and cannon discharged from the walls.

The king first proceeded to the cathedral, where mass was celebrated, and the vast building being crowded on the occasion presented a magnificent sight,

Louis fixed his quarters in the Château de Saint Remi, where his large retinue could be accommodated. Apartments in the château were, of course, assigned to Isidore and his attendant, Claude ; and if the young esquire had been a prince, greater consideration could not have been shown him.

As the time approached when the terms of the peace he so ardently desired were to be settled, Louis redoubled his attentions to the English king's favourite, being still apprehensive of some miscarriage.

But all seemed to be going on smoothly, and a message was received from Edward

stating that he agreed to the proposed meeting at Corbie, and would send his commissioners thither on the appointed day.

The commissioners appointed by the English king were the Lord Howard, subsequently created Duke of Norfolk; Sir Thomas Saint Leger, one of the king's body-guard; Doctor Morton, Bishop of Ely, who subsequently became Lord Chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury; and Doctor Dudley, Dean of the Royal Chapel.

The commissioners chosen by Louis were Jean de Bourbon, Admiral of France, the Seigneur de Saint Pierre, and the Bishop of Evreux.

All difficulties seemed to have been removed, but still the suspicious King of France continued uneasy. He feared, and not without reason as it turned out, that

the Duke of Burgundy would make a determined effort to break off the treaty. To guard against this eventuality, which might have destroyed all his plans, he induced Isidore to write a letter to the King of England calculated to produce the desired effect.

XIII.

BY WHOSE CONTRIVANCE ISIDORE OVERHEARD WHAT PASSED
BETWEEN LOUIS AND THE ENVOYS OF THE DUKE OF BUR-
GUNDY AND THE CONSTABLE OF SAINT POL.

AT this critical juncture, the Duke of Burgundy was at Valenciennes, and he, having received some intelligence that secret negotiations were going on between the two kings, immediately despatched his chief councillor, the Sire de Coutai, to Louis, to make such terms with the king as he might deem advisable. At the same time, the Constable Saint Pol sent the Sire de Sainville on an errand of a like nature.

Both ambassadors arrived at Amiens about the same time, but were not allowed to meet. Anxious that Edward should know what dependence could be placed upon his allies, Louis devised a plan by which Isidore might overhear what passed at the audience.

In the reception-chamber was a large screen, behind which the Sire de Comines and the young esquire were concealed, while Louis sat down upon a fauteuil in front.

As soon as all was arranged, the Sire de Coutai was introduced, and immediately announced the duke's willingness to enter into a separate treaty with the king, if terms could be agreed upon.

“What terms does the duke require?” demanded Louis.

“Eu and Saint Valery, sire,” replied De Coutai.

“I will rather burn them to the ground than give them to him,” replied Louis. “Tell the duke, your master, that I am about to conclude a peace with the King of England, and if I gave those towns to any one, it would be to him, whom I have found loyal and honourable.”

“I knew not that the treaty was so far advanced, sire,” remarked De Coutai. “Me-thinks the duke, my master, ought to have been informed of it.”

“Wherefore?” demanded Louis, sternly. “The Duke of Burgundy has deceived his royal brother-in-law, and the King of England will no longer trust him. The English nobles and knights are boiling with rage at the tricks played them. Every treaty I

have made with the duke has been shamefully violated, and, by Saint Denis ! I will not make another treaty with him, unless he chooses to cede to me a part of his possessions."

"That he will never do, sire!" said De Sainville.

And with a profound reverence to the king, he retired.

At a summons from Louis, De Comines and Isidore came from their place of concealment.

"Now what think you of the Duke of Burgundy?" said Louis to the young esquire.

"Unless I had overheard what has passed, I could not have believed in his duplicity and ill faith, sire," replied Isidore. "King Edward will never trust him more."

“King Edward is unlucky in his allies,” remarked Louis, dryly. “You will find that the duke is more than matched by the Constable Saint Pol. But you must back again to your hiding-place, for here comes the constable’s envoy.”

As De Comines and Isidore slipped behind the screen, the Sire de Sainville was introduced by the usher, and was very graciously received by the king.

“My lord the constable desires me to offer your majesty the assurances of his entire devotion,” said De Sainville. “He will act in any way you may command him. From the first, he has energetically remonstrated with the Duke of Burgundy against his alliance with England, and has endeavoured to induce him to break it off. At

last his representations have been successful."

"And for this good service I am indebted to the constable?" remarked Louis.

"Entirely so, sire," remarked De Sainville. "I know not what he said to the duke; but I never saw his grace in such a furious passion. Very little would have induced him to fall upon the English, and plunder them. He was especially enraged against his brother-in-law, the King of England, and spoke of him in no measured terms."

"Aha! what did he say? How looked he when he spoke?" demanded Louis.

"He looked half-frenzied, sire," replied De Sainville. "His gestures were as violent as his words. He stamped furiously on the

ground thus," suiting the action to the word, "and smote the table with his gauntleted hand. This was the manner of his speech," continued De Sainville, trying to give an imitation of the tremendous voice : "'By Saint George, this King of England has no royal blood in his veins. He is the son of Blackbourn, the handsome archer, who took the fancy of the Duchess of York. Fiends take him for a vile ingrate ! When he fled from the Earl of Warwick, who made him a king, and then dethroned him, he came to me without a *denier*, and I gave him money, ships, and men, and enabled him to regain his kingdom, and now he abandons me ! But, by my father's head ! he shall regret it.' "

"Ha ! ha !" laughed Louis. "Said he aught more ?"

“Much, sire,” replied De Sainville. And again mimicking the duke’s voice, he said, “This luxurious king has come here as if to a festival. He has brought with him a pack of fat citizens, who think only of feasting and carousing. In addition to these boon companions, he has brought with him his favourite, the fair Mistress Shore.”

“Hold there!” cried Louis. “I will hear nought against Mistress Shore. She is accounted the handsomest woman in London. Nor can we match her in Paris. *Paques-Dieu!* King Edward did well to bring her. Had I been in his place, I would not have left her behind. Truly, the duke must be mad to talk thus! But hath his choler abated?”

"Not a whit, sire. He is still infuriated as ever against King Edward."

"And King Edward is justly indignant against him, so there is little chance of their reconciliation," remarked Louis. "I thank my good brother, the constable, for the assurances he has given me of his attachment, but I cannot entertain any proposition from him for the present. I will send a messenger to him when I have aught to communicate."

With this, he dismissed De Sainville, who felt he had gained nothing, and that the wily king had been merely trifling with him.

As soon as the envoy was gone, De Comines and Isidore again came forth.

"There is not much to choose between

the duke and the constable, you perceive," observed Louis, laughing.

"I know not which is worst," said Isidore. "Better have an enemy like your majesty, than such treacherous allies as these."

"That is precisely what I said," rejoined Louis.

"I am impatient to recount what I have just heard to King Edward," cried the esquire. "Shall I set out to the English camp at once?"

"No—defer your departure till the preliminaries of peace are settled," he remarked to Louis. "Should you be taken by the Duke of Burgundy or the constable, a heavy ransom would be demanded for you. But even if there were no danger,

I own I should be sorry to part with you."

"If I prolong my stay the king may grow impatient—"

"Write and reassure him. With such a hostage in my hands, I feel perfectly certain King Edward will perform his promises to me. He would be the first to laugh at me if I parted with you. So you must e'en tarry with me a little longer. I will do my best to amuse you."

Seeing it was useless to remonstrate, Isidore assented with a good grace, and withdrew.

De Comines was about to retire at the same time, but the king detained him.

"I have something for you to do," he said. "I want a large sum of money—a very large sum. Cost what it may, we

must get these English out of the country. We must refuse them nothing to get rid of them—nothing, except an acre of land, or a town. However short might be their stay, as in the time of the king, my father, the damage done would be enormous. Money must not be spared. The Chancellor must set out instantly for Paris, to raise the largest sum he can. Everybody must lend me money—everybody must aid me at this juncture. With money I can carry out my plans, and get rid of these accursed English, who have been brought here by that perfidious Charles the Bold, to serve his own purposes."

"Your majesty need have no fear," said De Comines. "You will easily obtain all the money you require."

"Ay, but I must have it at once," cried

the king. “ If my coffers are replenished, they will soon be emptied again. Beside the sum to be paid to King Edward, I shall have to make large gifts to his brothers, the Dukes of Clarenee and Gloucester—to all his privy-councillors—to his grand chamberlain, the Lord Hastings, who stands highest in his favour—to the Chancellor—to the Lord Howard—to Sir John Cheyne, the master of the horse—Sir Thomas Montgomery, and Sir Thomas Saint Leger.”

“ Your majesty must not omit the most important of all—the fair Mistress Shore,” said De Comines.

“ Hitherto, she has refused all I have offered her,” said Louis; “ but I have won her by fair speeches. It may be she will accept some gift at parting. We shall see. King Edward could not have served me

better than to send his mistress here. I marvel not he is so much enamoured of her. Of a truth, she is very charming."

De Comines smiled.

"Your majesty must not take her from him," he said, "or most assuredly the truce will be broken."

"I have no such thought," cried Louis. "I am all anxiety to get rid of Edward and his army. We must keep them all in good humour till they go. Rich presents shall be distributed among the king's retinue. I must entertain them all--entertain them royally. Those fat citizens, of whom I hear, must be feasted; and the common soldiers must have wine enough to drown them. All the taverns in Amiens shall be thrown open to them."

"A grand scheme, and I doubt not it

will answer your majesty's expectations," remarked De Comines.

"But to carry it out, I must have money," cried Louis—"a vast sum, as I have stated."

"I see the necessity, sire," said De Comines. "The money shall be procured."

"Then about it at once!" cried Louis. "Let the Chancellor and the chief financiers set out for Paris without delay, and bring back with them two hundred thousand crowns."

XIV.

HOW THE SIRE DE MERANCOURT BECAME ENAMOURED OF
JANE, AND OF THE STRATAGEM BY WHICH HE OBTAINED
ADMITTANCE TO HER CHAMBER.

By this time it had become generally known that the handsome young envoy from the King of England was no other than the beautiful Mistress Shore in disguise, and several young nobles of the Court sought to win her regard, but she would listen to none of them.

The Sire de Merancourt, a daring and profligate young noble, famed for his suc-

cesses, had made sure of an easy conquest, and was especially mortified by the repulse he received, but he determined not to give up the pursuit.

“She shall be mine,” he said to the Seigneurs de Bressuire and Briuebec, with whom he was conversing. “It would be an eternal disgrace to us if she were allowed to return to her royal lover. If he loses her, as he will, he will only have himself to blame. It would be a poor compliment to our French gallantry to suppose that we should not make ourselves agreeable to her. She affects to be cold, as if it were possible a fair creature, who has excited so strong a passion in King Edward’s breast as to make him neglect his queen, could be cold !”

“No, no!” cried Briuebec; “and I hold it impossible she can be faithful to such an

inconstant lover as King Edward. She is afraid there are too many spies about the Court, and that any little affair in which she might be engaged would come to the ears of her royal lover."

"Our king keeps a jealous watch over her, that is certain," remarked De Bresuire. "One would almost think he was in love with her himself."

"Despite all difficulties, she shall be mine!" cried Merancourt. "I have never yet found the woman who could resist me, nor shall fair Mistress Shore. To-night I am resolved to see her alone; but I must have recourse to stratagem to obtain admittance to her chamber. To-morrow, you shall hear how I have been received."

They then separated.

On that evening, Jane was alone in her

room with Alice. She had resumed her female attire, but her attendant was still in the garb of a page.

Just as they were about to retire to rest, a tap was heard at the outer door; and when it was incautiously opened by Alice, a richly-attired young noble stepped in, and passing through the ante-chamber, shut the door, and fastened it inside, before Alice could follow him.

All this was the work of a moment. Then, rushing up to Jane, he fell on his knees before her, and, seizing her hand, pressed it passionately to his lips.

“At length I behold you in the dress of your own sex!” he cried, with well-feigned rapture; “and I must be permitted to express my admiration of your beauty! Per-

fectly as your disguise suits you, your own costume is infinitely more becoming!"

"Cease this strain, my lord," she cried, endeavouring, but vainly, to snatch away her hand. "I will not listen to it. Why have you come hither at this hour? Had I not supposed you brought a message from the king, you would not have been admitted! I must pray you at once to retire."

"Pardon me if I venture to disobey you, fair lady," he cried, quitting his kneeling position, but still retaining her hand. "If I am guilty of any apparent disrespect towards you, you must attribute it to the passion that overmasters me. I love you to distraction, and would run any risk for you. You cannot be insensible to love like mine!"

"Your words produce no other effect on me save displeasure, my lord," replied Jane, coldly; "and I must again beg you to retire, unless you would seriously offend me."

"Hear what I have to say!" cried Merancourt; "and if you still reject my suit, I will obey you. You cannot hope long to retain King Edward's love. Even now, perchance, it is on the wane, since he is noted for his inconstancy. But my love for you will be lasting. To me you will not be a toy, to be thought of for moments of dalliance, but an object of deep affection."

"I will hear no more," cried Jane, interrupting him angrily. "Leave me instantly, I command you."

"What if I refuse to go?" rejoined Merancourt.

“Then I will summon assistance!” she cried.

“I have taken all needful precautions to prevent interruption. My servants are without in the gallery.”

“Alice!” she exclaimed, in alarm.

“Your attendant is shut up in the antechamber,” he rejoined. “No one can come to you. You are completely in my power.”

“Not so,” cried Jane. “I can rouse the palace with my shrieks!”

“Be silent, madame, on your life!” he exclaimed, in a menacing voice, and grasping her arm so tightly that she could not stir from the spot.

At this juncture, when all seemed lost, unlooked-for assistance arrived.

A loud authoritative voice was heard in

the ante-chamber, which instantly caught the quick ear of Merancourt.

“Confusion! ‘Tis the king!” he exclaimed.

“The king! Then I am saved!” cried Jane.

And bursting from him, she flew to the door of the ante-chamber, and drew back the bolt.

Next moment, Louis entered the inner room, followed by Tristan l’Hermite.

“*Tête-Dieu!*” ejaculated the king. “Are we interrupting an amatory *tête-à-tête?*” But as no immediate reply was given, he said, sharply, “What brings you here, Sire de Merancourt?”

“Since your majesty demands an answer, I have only to say that I came here by

this fair lady's invitation," replied De Merancourt.

" 'Tis false, sire!" cried Jane; "and, till now, I did not believe a French noble would seek to shield himself by a base subterfuge. The Sire de Merancourt came here for a dishonourable purpose, and I have to thank your majesty for my preservation."

"I cannot for a moment doubt what you tell me, madame," rejoined Louis. "Nor does the Sire de Merancourt, who has thus sullied his proud name, attempt to contradict you. You are under arrest, my lord," he added to the young noble. "Tomorrow we will decide upon your punishment."

As Tristan advanced to fulfil the king's

command, Merancourt stepped towards Jane, and said :

“ Before I go hence, I ask forgiveness from this fair lady. My sole excuse,” he added, in a penitential tone, “ is that her charms have driven me distraught.”

“ And I am willing to attribute your conduct to disordered reason, my lord,” said Jane. “ ’Twould please me best, sire, if this matter were forgotten,” she added to the king.

“ Since such is your desire, madame, I will not oppose it,” said Louis, “ though I feel I am dealing far too leniently with the offender. “ The Sire de Merancourt may thank you for his escape. What I came here to say to you must be reserved till to-morrow. May your sleep be sound

after this disturbance, and no ill dreams annoy you!"

So saying, he departed with Tristan.

Merancourt fixed an imploring look at Jane, who averted her gaze from him, and, bowing deeply, followed the king from the room.

XV.

OF THE TERRIBLE REPROACHES ADDRESSED BY CHARLES
THE BOLD TO KING EDWARD.

MEANWHILE, the negotiation continued without interruption.

A conference took place at Corbie, as appointed, between the French and English commissioners, and the terms of the treaty having been definitively settled by them, it was agreed that the two monarchs should hold an interview at Piequigny, when they could mutually swear to the performance of the conditions.

Intelligence of this important arrangement having reached the Duke of Burgundy, who was then at Luxembourg, he set off at once with a retinue of only sixteen men, and on the evening of the same day arrived at the English camp.

Dismounting at the entrance of the royal pavilion, he burst abruptly into the king's presence.

Edward, who was conferring with the Lord Howard at the time, instantly arose on the duke's entrance, but forbore to embrace him. For a few moments they stood gazing at each other.

The duke was the first to break silence.

"I would speak to you alone," he said.

At a sign from his royal master, Lord Howard instantly retired.

As soon as they were alone, the duke ad-

vanced somewhat nearer to the king, and, regarding him fiercely, said :

“ Is it true you have made peace with Louis without consulting me ? ”

“ Nothing can be more certain,” replied Edward. “ The negotiation was concluded two days ago, at Corbie, between the Admiral of France, the Lord of Saint Pierre, and the Bishop of Evreux, on the part of Louis, and the Lord Howard and three chief commissioners, on my part. I was about to send you word that the treaty was signed.”

As Edward spoke thus calmly, the duke made an effort to repress his wrath ; but it now burst forth with perfect fury, and he stamped and foamed with wrath.

“ Ha ! by Saint George ! by Our Lady ! by Our Lord and Master ! ” he cried, dashing

in pieces a small table that stood near him. “ You have signed your own dishonour ! You consent, at the bidding of the wily Louis, to recross the sea without fighting a single battle—without even splintering a lance ! Have you forgotten what was done by your valiant ancestor, King Edward the Third ?—how, with much smaller force than yours, he invaded France, and gained the glorious battles of Crécy and Poitiers ? Have you forgotten the great deeds of Henry the Fifth, whose race you have extinguished, and whose son you have murdered ? With half the number of men you have brought with you, King Henry fought and conquered at Azincourt ! Nor would he return till he was master of France. And you,” he continued, in accents of the deepest scorn—“ you, who boast of having

won nine battles, now propose to depart, having done nothing, and won nothing! You allow yourself to be cajoled, and accept a worthless peace!"

After a momentary pause, he went on.

"Mistake me not. 'Tis the maintenance of your honour that brings me here. To me this ignominious truce matters nothing. Not for my own interest did I counsel you to invade France. I do not need your aid. Charles of Burgundy can defend himself against his foes, as his foes will find. Farewell, brother!"

And he turned to depart, but Edward called out to him :

"Stay, brother. I have listened to you patiently—too patiently, perchance—and, by Heaven! you shall now listen to me."

“Say on, then,” cried the duke, sternly.
“But think not to move me.”

Edward then went on, the calm dignity of his deportment forming a marked contrast to the duke’s violence.

“Better than any one else, brother,” he said, “you are acquainted with the motives of my voyage to this country, and if you choose to forget them, I must refresh your memory. Amiens and other towns had been taken from you by Louis, and despite all your efforts, you could not regain them.”

“By Our Lady! I *shall* regain them, and without your aid,” cried the duke.

“But your design in bringing me here,” pursued Edward, “was that I should hold Louis in check, and keep him from Flanders

and Artois, while you made war on your own account on parts of Germany and Lorraine. To lure me over, you made abundance of fair promises, and declared I should win mountains of gold. You would wait for me, you said, in the Boulonnais, with a large army. Where are your knights, your men-at-arms, and your foot soldiers? melted like snow in the sun. When you came to me in Calais, you had not even a page to attend you."

"I might have had a fair dame, disguised as an esquire, to accompany me, had I so chosen," observed the duke, scornfully.

"An idle taunt," said Edward. "I came to France solely to aid you; but since, owing to your folly, you are unable to carry out your projects, I have nothing more to do here. Had I desired to fight for

the honour of England, I should have acted very differently. Not requiring your help, I should have made the invasion at the time and place that best suited me; and ere I had been in France a week, several towns taken or burnt, and a multitude of enemies destroyed, would have shown that it was England's quarrel, and not Burgundy's, in which I was engaged."

"You talked otherwise, brother, when you sought my aid to regain your kingdom," observed Charles, in a tone of haughty reproach. "Had I refused you, Henry the Sixth, or his son, whom you have slain, would now be on the throne of England. For the last time I ask, are you resolved to make this disgraceful peace?"

"Firmly resolved; nor do I hold the peace to be disgraceful," rejoined Edward.

“I shall sign the treaty, and, by Heaven’s grace, I will keep it.”

“Be it so,” cried the duke, furiously; “Louis has completely outwitted you. This stain upon your arms will dim the splendour of all your former exploits.”

Thereupon, he quitted the pavilion, and, mounting his charger, rode off with his slender retinue.

Though highly incensed, Edward did not seek to stay him.

XVI.

SHOWING IN WHAT MANNER THE WHOLE ENGLISH ARMY
WAS ENTERTAINED BY KING LOUIS AT AMIENS.

So delighted was Louis with the result of the negotiation, and so fearful lest some misunderstanding should arise before the treaty was concluded, that he spared nothing to keep the English in good humour.

Presents were bestowed with a lavish hand. Annual pensions were promised to Edward's privy councillors, to the Lord Hastings two thousand crowns, to the Lord Chancellor a like sum, and one thousand

crowns each to the Marquis of Dorset, the Lord Howard, and Sir John Cheyne. Numberless other presents were made, both jewels and money, by the open-handed French monarch; and as he had now raised a large loan in Paris, he cared not what sums he spent.

As a boon to the English soldiers, by whom we may be sure it was highly appreciated, he sent a hundred charettes, laden with good wine, to the English camp, which, since the truce had been agreed upon, had been pitched on the banks of the Somme, within a league of Amiens.

Twenty waggons followed, laden with provisions, so that the whole army could make good cheer. This extraordinary liberality on the part of Louis produced the

effect anticipated, and put all the men in good humour.

But the French king's hospitality did not end here. He caused it to be announced in the English camp that all knights and esquires, and all the chief men-at-arms, would be welcome at Amiens; that all the taverns in the town would be thrown open to them, and that they would everywhere be entertained free of cost. Special invitations were given to nobles and distinguished personages, and to the citizens of London.

At first this invitation was laughed at as a jest, but those who rode from the camp to Amiens found it was seriously made. Four long tables had been placed at the north gate, furnished with all kinds of

relishing viands, hams, tongues, dried fish, and a profusion of the best wines of Bordeaux.

The king's chamberlains, the Seigneurs de Craon, Briuebec, Bressuire, and Villiers, presided over the tables, and when an English knight appeared, a groom went up to him, and bowing respectfully, led his horse to one of the chamberlains, who courteously besought him to alight, saying, "Come, and break a lance with us, fair sir!" A place was then found him at the table, and assiduous serving-men ministered to his wants.

As will be readily conjectured, the tables became so crowded that not a place could be found, and those who came late were sent on to the taverns, where they were hospitably entertained.

A goodly sight it was to see the English knights received thus courteously by their somewhat enemies, who now challenged them only with goblets of wine, and the French king's courtiers were infinitely amused by the scene.

But none of the English were so gratified by their reception as the citizens of London. For more than a week these self-indulgent personages had been restricted to poor fare, and had drunk but little wine. Dainties of all kinds were now set before them, with abundance of fine wines, and they feasted as joyously as if they had been at some great City banquet, and drank the health of their royal host in flowing cups. Louis had given orders that they should want nothing, and his injunctions were obeyed.

But as the festival went on, the courtesy

of the chamberlains and the civility of the attendants were severely tried by their guests, who began to wax noisy and insolent, and quarrels were with difficulty averted.

If the knights were troublesome, it was still worse with the men-at-arms and archers, who now began to flock into the town in crowds, invaded the taverns and private houses, and drank to excess. Had the French been disposed to fall upon them when they were thus stupefied, they could easily have massacred them all. But Louis had no such design. The Sire de Torci, grand-master of the cross-bowmen, complained to him of the disorderly conduct of the English soldiers, but the king commanded him not to interfere, dreading lest a quarrel should begin.

Next day, however, the influx of English soldiers into the town became so great that the guard grew alarmed, and the Sire de Comines deemed it necessary to warn the king, who was preparing to attend mass in the cathedral.

“Sire,” said the councillor, “I am unwilling to interfere with your devotions; but the matter on which I have to speak to you is urgent. Something must be done, or mischief will infallibly ensue. More than nine thousand English soldiers are now in Amiens.”

“*Diantre!* Nine thousand!” exclaimed the king, amazed.

“Yes, sire; and they are all armed. Others are continually arriving, and none are stopped at the gate, for fear of giving them offence. I fear your majesty’s con-

sideration for your former foes has been carried a little too far."

Pâques-Dieu ! this must be stopped," cried Louis. "Mount at once. Ride to the English camp as quickly as you can, and see Lord Hastings, or Lord Howard, or some other English noble of sufficient authority to stop the invasion. If need be, see the king himself. Away with you. I will meet you on your return at the north gate."

As the Sire de Comines departed on his errand, Louis—who was not very seriously alarmed, for he thought the numbers had been greatly exaggerated by his councillor—proceeded to the cathedral.

As he entered the sacred edifice, justly accounted one of the noblest structures

in France, he found the whole interior thronged with English soldiers.

Though somewhat alarmed at first, he was quickly reassured by the quiet deportment of the men, who were looking upwards at the lofty roof, surveying the enormous pillars lining the aisles, peering into the numerous beautiful chapels, or gazing with wonder at the three magnificent rose windows adorning the transept.

Thus occupied, they did not even notice the king's entrance by a side door. When the solemn service commenced, they all knelt down, and at its close departed without making any disturbance.

Wishing to ascertain as far as he could by personal observation what was going on outside the town, Louis determined to mount the cathedral tower, and though Tristan

endeavoured to dissuade him, he persisted, and accomplished the ascent.

Two other persons were on the summit of the tower when he reached it with Tristan, and these proved to be Isidore and Claude.

“I did not expect to find you here,” said Louis, as soon as he recovered sufficient breath to speak.

“I came here to look at the English camp, sire, since I am not allowed to go there,” rejoined Isidore.

“Can you see it?” cried Louis.

“Distinctly, sire,” was the reply. “I can point out the king’s pavilion to your majesty.”

“Show it me,” said Louis, advancing to the battlement.

About half a league off, in a broad plain,

contiguous to the River Somme, and surrounded by fine trees, lay the English camp, presenting a vast array of tents, in front of which stood Edward's large cloth of gold pavilion, plainly distinguishable, as well for its superior size and splendour as from the royal standard floating above it. Close beside the pavilion a clump of spears was collected, and the sunbeams glittered brightly on their polished helms and armour.

Riding slowly along the central alley of the camp, attended by a score of knights, was a majestic personage, mounted on a richly-trapped charger. Isidore felt sure this must be the king, and Louis himself entertained the same opinion. The whole camp seemed astir, and various martial sounds, such as the beating of drums and

the fanfares of trumpets, were distinctly audible, even at that distance.

But the attention of Louis was chiefly attracted by the number of men-at-arms marching from the camp to Amiens. Now and then, a knight, or a few mounted archers, rode in the same direction; but, generally speaking, the throng consisted of foot soldiers.

From the lofty position he had taken up, a very good idea could be formed by Louis of the actual state of the town, and it was such as to cause him considerable uneasiness. Of course, the ramparts and gates were guarded by his own soldiers, as was the Château de Saint Remi, where a large body of troops were assembled, but all the public places seemed filled with English

archers and men-at-arms, who far outnumbered the French.

“*Grand Dieu!*” exclaimed Louis, filled with consternation at the sight. “How are we to get rid of them?”

“Only let them drink enough, sire,” rejoined Tristan, significantly, “and I warrant they shall not trouble your majesty long.”

“May the fiend take thee for the villainous suggestion!” said Louis, sharply. “No harm must be done them. They are my guests, and shall depart in safety.”

“But they are quarrelsome, sire, and our soldiers will brook no insults,” said Tristan.

“If a quarrel arises, our own soldiers will be in fault, because they will disobey my

express injunctions," said Louis. "Therefore, punish *them*—not the English."

"I would these accursed Englishmen had never been allowed to enter the town!" grumbled Tristan. "I fear they will never return to their own quarters!"

"If your majesty will allow me to go to the English camp, I am sure I can prevail upon King Edward to recall them," said Isidore.

"No, no; I do not desire to trouble the king," cried Louis. "Return to the castle, and do not stir forth again unless I send for you."

Without another word, he descended from the tower, followed by Tristan, and immediately quitting the cathedral, repaired to the north gate.

There he found several of his captains,

and ordered each of them to assemble a hundred men secretly in his quarters, so as to be ready in case of emergency. Moreover, he directed that the guard at the castle should be doubled—giving strict instructions that the slightest disposition to tumult should be everywhere repressed, but that the greatest forbearance should be shown towards the English.

These orders given, he proceeded to the long tables outside the gate, which were still crowded as before. All the guests arose on his appearance, and made the place resound with their shouts.

After pledging them in a cup of wine, Louis begged them to be seated, and turned his attention to the citizens of London, who had again found their way to the place of entertainment. They were charmed with

the king's gracious manner, as were all whom he addressed, and matters were proceeding most satisfactorily, when the Sire de Comines returned from the English camp, bringing with him Lord Hastings, the Earl of Northumberland, and Lord Howard.

On seeing these nobles, Louis felt quite easy. He received them without ceremony, and invited them to a repast, which he had caused to be set out in the guard-chamber of the gate.

XVII.

HOW THE SIRE DE MERANCOURT AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO CARRY OUT HIS DESIGN, AND BY WHOM HE WAS SLAIN.

MEANWHILE, Isidore and Claude, in obedience to the king's commands, had quitted the tower of the cathedral, and returned to their apartments in the Château de Saint Remi, where they remained till evening.

Isidore had heard of the arrival of the English nobles, and fully expected they would bring him some message from King Edward ; but none came, and he did not attempt to conceal his disappointment.

“ Methinks the king has forgotten me,” he said. “ He is content that I should remain as a hostage for him, and cares not to send me a word when an opportunity offers, though he knows how welcome a message would be. As to Lord Hastings and the others, their negligence is inexcusable. They ought to have waited upon me as soon as they had seen King Louis.”

“ But consider what they have to do!” said Claude. “ It will be no easy matter, even for Lord Hastings, to get back these unruly soldiers, now they have broken loose. Be sure no disrespect is intended you. Your term of probation will soon be over. Two days hence, the truce will be signed, and then you will be at liberty once more.”

“ That will be delightful !” cried Isidore.

“Oh, how glad I shall be to return to England ! I am quite tired of France.”

Thus they continued to converse, till it began to grow dark, and Isidore had given up hopes of seeing Lord Hastings, or any other English noble, when an attendant entered the room, having with him a page, who said that he was come to conduct the young esquire to the king.

“I will attend him at once,” replied Isidore, joyfully. “Where is his majesty?”

“At the north gate of the town,” replied the page. “There are several English nobles with him.”

“You hear !” cried Isidore, to Claude. “They have not forgotten us.”

“So it seems,” replied Claude. “Shall I accompany you ?”

Isidore assented, but the page said his

orders were only to bring the young esquire; so Claude was, perforce, left behind.

Wholly unsuspecting of any ill design, Isidore quitted the château by a postern, and entered a public place, which was now filled with English soldiers, evidently fresh from the taverns.

To avoid these men, the page turned into a narrow thoroughfare, which appeared totally free from obstruction, though it did not seem to Isidore to lead in the direction of the north gate.

It was now growing dark; and as there were no lights in the houses, the streets they were tracking had a gloomy and deserted look, and offered a strong contrast to the noisy and crowded public place they had just quitted.

As they went on, Isidore noticed two

persons about fifty yards in front, one of whom turned round ever and anon, as if to watch them.

Trifling as was this circumstance, it caused him some alarm ; but his uneasiness was increased when he perceived they were followed by another individual, who appeared to regulate his pace by theirs, and kept at a certain distance behind them.

At the same time, Isidore began to suspect that the page was taking him in a wrong direction, and he questioned him on the point.

“ Are you sure this street leads to the north gate ? ” he asked.

“ Quite sure,” replied the other. “ I have brought you this way to avoid those drunken English soldiers.”

Somewhat reassured by the answer, Isi-

dore went on, until a gateway could be distinguished, communicating, no doubt, with some large mansion ; and near this gateway the two persons, who had thus far preceded them, suddenly halted.

Isidore's misgivings now returned, and with redoubled force ; and he would have retreated, if he had not perceived that the third individual was still behind.

He, therefore, endeavoured to pass on ; but one of the persons who had inspired him with so much terror stopped him, and said, in accents that were instantly recognised as those of the Sire de Merancourt :

“ Will not the fair Mistress Shore deign to enter my house ? ”

“ I know not what you mean,” replied the supposed esquire ; “ but I cannot be

hindered. My attendant will tell you that I am on the way to the king."

"The king must wait for you, fair lady," said Merancourt. "The stratagem has succeeded perfectly, and has placed you in my hands. Enter, I beg of you."

"You will repent your audacious design, my lord," rejoined Jane. "I will rather die than enter your house. Release me, I command you!"

"Do not compel me to use force, madame," said Merancourt. "You cannot escape me now. The gate is open, and will be closed as soon as you have passed through it. I will then defy King Edward—ay, even with our own king to aid him—to take you from me!"

"You will for ever stain your name, my

“Lord, if you commit this infamous act!” cried Jane, struggling to free herself from him. “Help, help!”

“You call in vain,” he rejoined. “No help will come.”

“You are mistaken, villain!” cried a voice that thrilled through Jane’s breast, and instantly dispelled her fears. “Defend yourself!”

Next moment, a knightly personage—it was the same individual who had followed her at a distance, and inspired her with distrust, like the others—came up, and attacked Merancourt, sword in hand.

Thus assailed, the libertine noble was compelled to relinquish his hold of Jane, who, however, did not take to flight, but awaited the issue of the conflict.

It was of brief duration.

Merancourt soon found he had a formidable antagonist to deal with. His sword was stricken from his grasp ; while, at the same time, a tremendous downward blow from his adversary's weapon cut through his steel cap, and stretched him lifeless on the ground. Merancourt's attendant took no part in the combat, nor did he exhibit a disposition to molest Jane.

Things remained in this state for a few moments, when the household, alarmed by the page, rushed forth with torches, and revealed a terrible scene.

Beside the body of the traitorous noble he had slain, stood the tall and majestic figure of a knight, clad in magnificent armour. He was leaning upon his sword, and the supposed esquire was clinging to his arm.

Not far off was Merancourt's pusillanimous attendant, who called upon the household to avenge their slaughtered lord, and they were preparing to make an attack upon the knight, when the sound of horses' footsteps was heard rapidly approaching, and, the next moment, a large party rode up to the spot.

At the head of the party was the French king in person, and with him were the Sire de Comines, Tristan, the Lord Hastings, and the other English nobles, who had come over from the camp. Louis was followed by some half-dozen grooms, and a small escort of mounted archers.

Pâques-Dieu!" he exclaimed, gazing at the scene. "De Merancourt slain!"

"Yes, sire; he deserved his fate," re-

joined Jane. “I have been rescued, as you perceive, by this English knight.”

“By Our Lady he has done well!” exclaimed Louis; “although he has robbed my gossip, Tristan, of a fee. But how is your deliverer called?” he added, gazing at the tall knight, who had now lowered his vizor.

Before replying, Jane consulted the knight, and then said :

“With your majesty’s permission, he desires to preserve his incognito.”

“As he will,” rejoined Louis; “though I should have been glad to have a little talk with him. Perchance he does not know our language.”

“He speaks it perfectly, sire,” replied Jane.

“Then let him ask me a boon, and by Saint Louis, my ancestor, I will grant it!” replied the king.

“I take you at your word, sire,” said the tall knight, stepping forward, and making a stately bow. “’Tis plain, from what has just happened, that the charge of this fair lady must be a great trouble to your majesty. Lest any further mischief should happen, I will ask you to allow me to conduct her in safety to King Edward.”

“But I hold her as a hostage,” cried Louis.

“Have no fear, sire,” said the knight; “King Edward will perform his promise.”

“You answer for him?” cried Louis.

“As for myself, sire,” replied the knight.

“Then take her to him. By my faith, I shall not be sorry to be rid of the respon-

sibility. Tell my good cousin, King Edward, that I have done my best to look after her, but, as he wots well, a precious jewel is more easily guarded than a fair woman. I would have hanged this daring traitor had he stolen the prize, but still the king might not have been altogether content."

"'Tis better as it is, sire," replied the knight.

And, with another stately bow to the king, he sprang upon a charger brought him by a groom while the previous discourse took place.

At the same time Jane was provided with a palfrey by Claude, who, it appeared, was among the attendants of the English nobles.

"A word at parting," said Louis, signing to Jane, who came close up to him.

Lowering his voice to a whisper, he then added, “ King Edward must be at Picquigny on the appointed day. Come with him.”

“ Rely on me, sire,” she replied.

And, bending low, she joined the knight.

The English nobles then took leave of Louis with every mark of respect, and Lord Hastings assured his majesty that he should experience no further annoyance from the soldiers who had so much abused his hospitality, and who should thenceforward be kept strictly within the camp.

As they turned to depart, Louis ordered De Comines to escort them to the north gate.

As soon as they were gone, he remarked to Tristan, with a singular smile, “ Canst thou not guess the name and rank of that

tall knight by whom De Merancourt has been slain?"

"No, sire," replied the provost-marshall; "but I conclude he is some one of importance, from the attention paid him by your majesty."

"So far thou art right, gossip," rejoined Louis. "He is a person of the utmost importance—no other than the King of England."

"The King of England!" exclaimed Tristan, in astonishment. "And your majesty had him in your power, and allowed him to depart! *Tête-Dieu!* I could not have believed it."

XVIII.

HOW A WOODEN BRIDGE WAS BUILT ACROSS THE SOMME,
AT PICQUIGNY, BY LOUIS, FOR HIS PROPOSED INTERVIEW
WITH THE KING OF ENGLAND.

PICQUIGNY, the little village selected by Louis the Eleventh for his proposed interview with Edward the Fourth, belonged to the Vidame of Amiens, and was distant about three leagues from that town.

It was situated upon the Somme, which, though not very wide at the point, was extremely deep—a circumstance to which Louis attached the utmost importance, as

he did not desire that the English troops should be able to ford the river. On a high, rocky hill dominating the village, stood a large château, bearing a strong resemblance to Windsor Castle ; but this fortress was now in ruins, having been partially destroyed by the Duke of Bourbon.

Having chosen the spot, after due consideration, Louis caused a wooden bridge to be constructed at Piequigny, according to his own plans. In the centre of the bridge, which, though merely intended for a temporary purpose, was solidly built, was a sort of latticed cabinet, or shed, divided in the midst by stout oaken bars, placed so close together, that only a man's arm could be thrust between them. Neither door nor wicket was allowed, consequently no one could pass through the barrier. By this

means all danger of a sudden and treacherous attack was avoided.

Roofed with boards, the structure was sufficiently large to contain a dozen persons on either side. The bridge was protected by high rails, and was exceedingly narrow, so that those using it were almost compelled to proceed singly.

Only a small boat, with one oarsman, was to be allowed on the river during the meeting.

Louis had been led to take all these precautions from a terrible incident that had occurred at the meeting between his father, then Dauphin of France, and Duke John of Burgundy, on the bridge of Montereau, and, as he frequently alluded to this tragical occurrence, it may be proper to narrate it.

When Duke John of Burgundy advanced with a powerful army, to raise the siege of Rouen, it was agreed between him and the Dauphin, afterwards Charles the Seventh, that they should hold a meeting at the bridge of Montereau.

In the middle of the bridge a strong barrier was therefore erected, shut by a gate that could be bolted on either side. All the duke's serving-men tried to dissuade him from the interview, telling him he would be betrayed, but their prayers and entreaties were of no avail. A Jew, belonging to his house, told him if he went he would never return. Nothing would deter him. Setting out with four hundred men-at-arms, he arrived at Montereau about two o'clock, and at once proceeding to the barrier with his attendants, found the Sire de Beauveau

and Tanneguy Duchâtel ready to receive him.

“ Monsieur awaits you,” said Tanneguy, bowing.

Having taken the oath, the duke said, “ You see that I and the Sire de Navailles are unarmed.”

No sooner had he passed on, than Tanneguy urged De Navailles to follow.

The Dauphin was already in the wooden cabinet in the middle of the bridge, with his attendants. The duke advanced, and, taking off his black velvet cap, bent the knee to the prince, who immediately raised him.

Then Tanneguy shouted, “ Kill ! kill !” Whereupon the Dauphin’s attendants struck down the duke with their battle-axes and swords, and likewise slew the Sire de Na-

vailles, who attempted to defend his master.

A crowd of armed men then rushed on the bridge from the side of the town, and all the Burgundian knights were seized and made prisoners.

Such was the terrible occurrence that caused Louis to be so cautious in constructing the barrier at Picquigny.

Apparently, he had no desire to repeat his father's treacherous act, which had been attended by direful consequences, and he probably reflected that if Edward should be slain like the Duke of Burgundy, a large army, with skilful leaders, was close at hand to avenge his death.

But Louis was not altogether free from fear that some treachery might be practised

against himself. No gate was therefore allowed in the middle of the bridge.

At length the day arrived appointed for the meeting of the two monarchs.

On the morning a circumstance occurred which, in that superstitious age, could not fail to be regarded as a favourable omen by the whole English army. A white dove alighted on Edward's pavilion, and remained there till the king set out for the interview.

The first, however, to arrive at Picquigny was King Louis, who was still fearful something might go wrong.

Attended by eight hundred picked men-at-arms, he had with him the Duke de Bourbon, and the Cardinal de Bourbon, Archbishop of Lyons, besides many other nobles and knights. His three favourites,

Tristan l’Hermite, Olivier le Dain, and Jacques Coictier were likewise in attendance upon him.

On this occasion, as a mark of special favour, or it may be from some other motive, Philippe de Comines was attired precisely like his majesty, in a gown of black velvet, and wore round his neck the collar of Saint Michael.

All the arrangements were made in obedience to the king’s commands. The bridge had been completed on the day before, and now formed the object to which all eyes were directed.

On one side floated the French oriflamme —on the other the royal standard of England. A dozen mounted arbalestriers guarded the left bank; while a like num-

ber of English archers were stationed at the opposite entrance.

The village of Picquigny, and the partly demolished château, were occupied by the French men-at-arms, and it was clear that their position was the most advantageous, the bank on this side being high, and the road good, whereas the ground on the other side was flat and marshy, and the causeway extremely narrow.

Had treachery been intended, this approach would have been fraught with danger to Edward. But he had no distrust. Indeed, the sight of his army, drawn up in battle array at no great distance, was well calculated to reassure him.

That mighty host, with its knights clad in glittering mail, its lances, its archers, its men-at-arms, and its long train of artillery,

presented a most imposing appearance, and increased the anxiety of Louis to get rid of such a strong hostile force. He watched Edward as he rode along the narrow and dangerous causeway, just described, and could not help admiring his goodly presence.

Splendidly attired in cloth of gold, with his girdle blazing with gems, the English monarch wore a black velvet cap, ornamented with a large *fleur-de-lys* of diamonds. Never did he look more regal than on this occasion ; and his stately figure, handsome countenance, and majestic deportment not only excited the admiration of Louis, but of all who beheld him. He rode a magnificently-trapped war-horse with housings covered with the royal cognizances.

Close behind him, and mounted on a palfrey, came a young esquire, whose slight, graceful figure was displayed to the greatest advantage in a doublet of white velvet, embroidered with silver, hose of white silk, and brodequins of crimson morocco. A cap of blue velvet, adorned with a white plume, covered his sunny locks.

The Duke of Clarence, who came next, was almost as superbly attired as his royal brother, but he could not for a moment be compared with him. Gloucester was absent, having declined to attend the meeting. Then came the Earl of Northumberland, the Marquis of Dorset, and the Lords Hastings and Howard, all four arrayed in blue cloth of gold, and well mounted.

Then followed the Bishop of Lincoln, at that time Chancellor of England. The

Chancellor was attended by Sir John Cheyne and Sir Thomas Montgomery.

A body-guard of a hundred lances, commanded by Sir Thomas Saint Leger, accompanied the king.

As Edward rode on by the side of the deep-flowing river, and gazed at the bridge on which the interview was to take place, some misgivings crossed him, and he began to think he had been outwitted by the wily French king. Was the treaty really as ignominious as it had been styled by the Duke of Burgundy? If so, it might yet be broken.

Agitated by these thoughts, he glanced at Isidore, who, reading what was passing in his breast, urged him by a look to go on.

On reaching the pavilion placed near the entrance of the bridge, Edward was greatly

surprised to find there was not a French noble—not even a page—stationed there to receive him, but he soon understood that no one could cross the bridge.

Laughing at the unusual precautions taken by Louis, he waited till his retinue had assembled, and then alighting, stepped upon the bridge, closely followed by Isidore.

XIX.

IN WHOSE PRESENCE THE MEETING TOOK PLACE BETWEEN
THE TWO MONARCHS, AND HOW THE TRUCE AGREED
UPON WAS SWORN TO BY THEM.

As Edward advanced at a slow and dignified pace, he could see Louis watching him from behind the barrier, like some wild animal peering through the bars of a cage.

On his part, however, the French king was greatly struck by the good looks of the English monarch, for he remarked to De

Comines, “By my faith ! our good cousin is very handsome.”

“And note you not, sire, that the king has got Isidore with him ?” rejoined the councillor.

“Ay ; all will go well,” said Louis.

With the French king were a dozen nobles—the most important among them being the Duke de Bourbon, and his brother, the cardinal—but they were almost hidden from view by the barrier.

Behind Edward came the Duke of Clarence, the Chancellor, the Earl of Northumberland, the Marquis of Dorset, Lord Hastings, and other nobles and knights.

On arriving within a few paces of Louis, whom he could now distinguish perfectly, with De Comines standing behind him in precisely similar attire, Edward removed

his velvet cap, and made a profound reverence, almost bending his knee to the ground.

Louis returned the salutation with equal form, after which they both arose, and embraced each other as well as they could through the bars.

“You are right welcome, cousin,” exclaimed the French king, in tones of the utmost cordiality, and with a look of perfect good nature. “There is no one on earth whom I more desire to see than you. Heaven be praised that we meet at last under such agreeable circumstances, and with such kindly feelings towards each other.”

“I heartily reciprocate your majesty’s sentiments,” replied Edward. “I am overjoyed to meet a monarch who has justly ac-

quired a reputation for consummate genius and wisdom. Believe, I pray you, that it has been matter of the greatest regret to me whenever I have had a difference with your majesty."

"Let all that be forgotten, cousin," said Louis with great *bonhomie*. "We are good friends now, and I hope shall long continue so. I rejoice to see you, and all those with you—and not the least, the young esquire who has lately been my guest. But a truce to compliments! Let us to business."

"By all means, sire," replied Edward. "We are quite ready."

At a sign from him, the Chancellor advanced. He was in his ecclesiastical habits, and spoke as follows, in solemn and impressive accents:

"When two of the most powerful mo-

narchs on earth meet together to settle a dispute—not by arms, but peaceably and reasonably—it is a joyful thing for themselves and for their people, but it is also highly pleasing to our blessed Lord, whose kingdom is of peace. It was said of old that in Picquigny a great peace would be concluded, and the prediction has now come to pass, and in a most remarkable manner. Moreover, another wondrous thing has happened. This very morn, a dove, white as silver, alighted on the tent of the King of England, and remained there for some time, in the sight of the whole army."

"Showing that the peace is approved by Heaven," said Louis, bowing his head reverently; "since the dove is the emblem of peace. Did not the Holy Spirit, in the

form of a dove, appear at the baptism of our Lord, who is the Prince of Peace? There cannot be a better omen."

After reciting a prayer, during which Louis knelt down devoutly, the Chancellor proceeded to read the conditions of the treaty.

This done, the most important part of the performance took place, and the incident excited great curiosity among the spectators.

Owing to the separation of the two monarchs by the barrier, some little difficulty was experienced in carrying out the ceremonial about to be described; but, at last, it was satisfactorily accomplished.

Each sovereign, placing one hand upon a missal, and the other on a portion of the

true cross held towards him by the Chancellor, solemnly swore to observe and maintain the conditions of the treaty, which was to remain in force for seven years.

The guardians of the treaty, on the part of the King of England, were the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, the Chancellor, the Keeper of the Privy Seal, the Governor of the Cinque Ports, and the Lieutenant-Governor of Calais.

Those on the part of the King of France were the Sire de Beaujeu, and Jean de Bourbon, Admiral of France. Next, the King of France engaged, not for himself alone, but for his successors, to pay to the King of England annually, the sum of fifty thousand crowns, to be delivered at the Tower of London; promising, also, to con-

tract for a loan with the bankers Medicis, of Florence.

A marriage was likewise agreed upon between the Dauphin and the Lady Elizabeth of England—Louis agreeing to pay to the princess a pension of sixty thousand crowns.

On his part, Edward agreed to return to England with his whole army, as soon as he had received the sum of seventy-five thousand crowns, without taking or attacking any town on the way, and to leave as hostages the Lord Howard and Sir John Cheyne—with one other person, to be named by the King of France.

A final stipulation was made by Louis for the liberation, on payment of a ransom of fifty thousand crowns, of Margaret of An-

jou, then a prisoner in the Tower of London.

All being arranged, Louis, who was in high glee, said to Edward :

“ You must come and see us in Paris, cousin. I will fête you as well as I can, and you will find there some of the fairest ladies in France, who will be delighted to see a monarch so renowned for good looks and gallantry.”

“ Your majesty tempts me very strongly,” replied Edward. “ Having heard so much of the Parisian dames, I would fain ascertain whether they are as charming as represented.”

“ Report scarcely does them justice, as you will find, cousin,” said Louis, still laughing.

“ Nay, then ; I must needs accept your

majesty's invitation," cried Edward. "Before I return, I will spend a month with you at the Louvre."

Louis seemed rather disconcerted. A month was much more than he had calculated upon. But Isidore came to his assistance.

"What will become of the army while your majesty is enjoying yourself at Paris for a month?" remarked the page.

"Bah! the army can remain at Calais," replied Edward, carelessly.

"That will scarcely suit his majesty of France, methinks," said Isidore. "Besides, it will infringe the main condition of the treaty."

"You are right," cried Louis, hastily. "In my desire to entertain my good cousin, I had overlooked this difficulty. I fear I

must defer the pleasure of seeing your majesty to another occasion," he added, to Edward.

"But the chances are I shall not be in France again," said Edward. "If I neglect this opportunity, I may never see your beautiful city."

"Oh, your majesty will be sure to come over when the Lady Elizabeth is married to the Dauphin," said Isidore.

"Certainly," replied Louis. "I shall expect you then, cousin, and will prepare some magnificent fêtes for you."

"But the fair dames will have grown old by that time," said Edward.

"Others, equally fair, will have succeeded them," rejoined Louis. "And now a word, cousin. As you are aware, I have stipulated for a third hostage. My choice

falls on this young esquire. He shall go with me to Amiens, but I will send him back before you embark at Calais."

"Are you content with the arrangement?" said Edward, to the esquire.

"Perfectly," was the reply. "I have experienced too much kindness from his majesty to entertain a doubt that he will take good care of me."

"Then be it so," said Edward. "If you fail to come to Calais, I shall return to fetch you," he added, with a laugh.

At the King of England's request, De Comines was then presented to him by Louis.

Edward received him very graciously, and shook hands with him through the barrier.

"'Tis not the first time I have met the

Sire de Comines," he said. " I saw him in Flanders, and was much beholden to him for the trouble he took to do me a service at the time of the revolts of the Earl of Warwick. I hope to have an early opportunity of proving my gratitude. Should he visit our Court, he will be right welcome."

De Comines bowed, and some other presentations took place ; after which the nobles on either side retired, and the monarchs continued their conference.

They spoke of the Duke of Burgundy, and Edward described his last interview with the duke, and mentioned that he had refused to become a party to the treaty.

" What shall we do, cousin, if he persists in his refusal ?" asked Louis.

" Possibly he may change his tone," said

Edward. “But if he continues obstinate, your majesty must deal with him as you think fit. He will have no further aid from me.”

“And what of the Duke of Bretagne?” asked Louis. “Shall I make war upon him, if he holds aloof?”

“Never with my consent, sire,” rejoined Edward, somewhat sternly. “Should he be attacked, I shall be constrained to assist him with all my power. The Duke of Bretagne has proved a good and faithful ally, and in my necessities I have never found so true a friend. Therefore, I am bound to stand by him, and by Saint George, I will do so!”

A cynical smile lighted up the French king’s countenance.

“I do not wonder your majesty should

feel grateful to the Duke of Bretagne," he said, in a sarcastic tone, "when I recollect that the duke holds in his hands the last representative of the House of Lancaster, and the sole aspirant to the crown of England. As long as Henry, Earl of Richmond, is in safe keeping, your majesty has nothing to fear."

Edward made no reply to this observation, and Louis went on.

"There is only one person left about whom it is needful to speak," he said. "You will guess that I allude to the Constable Saint Pol. I scarcely think you will interpose in his behalf."

"Act as you will in regard to the traitor, sire," cried Edward, almost fiercely. "He has proved false to both of us, and deserves death."

“My determination is to bring him to the scaffold,” said Louis; “but I am glad your majesty approves the design.”

With this, the conference ended.

After some further mutual expressions of regard, the sincerity of which may well be doubted, the two monarchs again embraced each other through the barrier, and separated.

XX.

HOW IT WAS SAID AT THE FRENCH COURT THAT SIX HUNDRED CASKS OF WINE AND A PENSION SENT KING EDWARD BACK TO ENGLAND.

BEFORE Edward quitted Picquigny, the Lord Howard, Sir John Cheyne, and Isidore, who were to remain as hostages with the King of France, were sent across the river in the boat we have alluded to, and accompanied Louis to Amiens.

Apartments were assigned them in the Château de Saint Remi, and Isidore returned to his former lodgings.

In the evening Louis sent for him, and said :

“I know you do not like to be separated from the king your master. You shall return to him to-morrow. I have only brought you here to have a little conversation with you, and make you some presents.

“I have already told your majesty that I do not desire any presents,” replied Isidore.

“But I shall be highly offended if you refuse this necklace,” he added, opening a case, and displaying a magnificent collar of glittering diamonds.

“I should be sorry to offend your majesty,” replied Isidore, unable to resist the splendid gift.

“And I must also insist upon your acceptance of twelve thousand crowns. Nay, you

need not hesitate. None of his majesty's attendants are so scrupulous."

"But I suppose you expect me to do something for the money, sire?" observed Isidore, with an arch smile.

"I wish you to entertain a pleasant remembrance of the meeting at Picquigny," said Louis; "and to keep me in the king's good opinion."

"That will be very easy to do, sire."

"I am not so sure. I have many enemies. I desire to stand well with my good cousin. May I count on your good offices with him?"

"Entirely, sire."

"I was foolish enough to invite him to Paris," pursued Louis. "I did not foresee the consequences of the visit. But it is

quite plain that the attractions of the place might detain him longer than would be desirable. You yourself might be supplanted in his favour."

"I will take care he does not go to Paris, sire," rejoined Isidore.

"Enough," cried Louis. "To-morrow you shall be escorted to the English camp. Always feel certain I am your friend. If there is any favour I can grant, hesitate not to ask it. Adieu!"

Next day, the Duke of Gloucester, who had declined to be present at the meeting at Picquigny, came to Amiens, and was exceedingly well entertained by Louis, who presented him with some magnificent silver vessels and plate, together with two richly caparisoned steeds. Rich gifts were likewise bestowed on the Duke of Clarence.

So extraordinarily lavish was Louis, that not a single English noble visited him, but he received a present of some kind. The large sums of money promised to the Lord Hastings, the Lord Chancellor, the Marquis of Dorset, and others, were punctually paid. Nothing was omitted.

Isidore was escorted to the English camp by the Sire de Comines, who took with him seventy-five thousand pounds for the king.

Having received this amount, Edward forthwith raised his camp, and marched back to Calais, where he rested for a few days, and then, greatly to the satisfaction of the wily Louis, embarked with his whole army, and arrived safely at Dover.

End of Book the Second.

Book the Third.

THE DUKE OF CLARENCE.

I.

HOW ISIDORE INFORMED MARGARET OF ANJOU THAT HER CAPTIVITY WAS AT AN END, AND HOW THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS RECEIVED.

In a gloomy chamber, in the upper story of a fortification situated in the north-east angle of the ancient wall surrounding the inner ward of the Tower of London, sat a majestic dame.

The chamber was almost circular in form, and in the stone walls, which were of enormous thickness, were three deep recesses,

very wide at the entrance, but terminated by narrow grated outlets.

Communicating with this prison-lodging was a small cell, contrived in the thickness of the wall. The room was scantily furnished, and contained only an oak table, and two or three chairs of the same material.

Against the wall, near one of the recesses, was fixed a crucifix, and beneath it was a prie-dieu of the same fashion.

She who was confined within this prison-chamber was not more than forty-five, but she looked much older, for sorrows, such as few have known, had done their work with her. Her frame was wasted, but not bowed; and her features, though stamped with grief, still retained traces of their former beauty. Her eye was bright, and

her expression proud, showing that, despite the agonising affliction she had endured her spirit was unsubdued. Her gown was of dark blue velvet, then used for mourning, and her hair was covered by a white linen frontlet. This majestic dame was Margaret of Anjou, once Queen of England, widow of Henry the Sixth, and mother of Prince Edward, ruthlessly slain at Tewkesbury.

Margaret heard the door of her prison open, but believing it to be the gaoler who had come in, and being occupied with her devotions at the time, she did not raise her eyes from her missal.

When she looked up, at length, she perceived a youth of slight and graceful figure standing at a little distance from her.

It was Isidore. The royal livery in

which he was clad, and which was embroidered with the badge of the House of York, displeased the queen; but the demeanour of the young esquire was exceedingly respectful, and his looks expressed profound sympathy.

"I come from the king, gracious madame," said Isidore, with a profound obeisance. "I have just returned with my royal master from France."

"Then you can tell me how your master's ignominious retreat was conducted," rejoined Margaret, scornfully. "After all his preparations and boasting, I am told he has not fought a battle."

"He has concluded a very advantageous treaty of peace with the King of France, madame, and that is better than a victory," replied Isidore.

“ Such a peace is more disgraceful than a defeat!” cried Margaret, sharply. “ ‘Tis plain, Louis has overreached him, and I am glad of it. But I should have been better pleased if you had brought me word that Edward’s host had been routed, and he himself and his brothers slain. Then I would have rewarded you with my last jewel.”

“ I hoped, madame, that your wrath against the king had in some degree abated,” said Isidore.

“ My wrath against the blood-stained usurper, whom you style king, but who has neither right nor title to the throne on which he sits, will never abate,” rejoined Margaret. “ Never can I pardon him who massacred my son, who ought now to be king, and who caused my husband, who

was king, to be foully assassinated. Maledictions, such as a widow and a bereaved mother can utter in her agony, have been invoked by me on his head. Daily have I implored Heaven to avenge my wrongs. I have prayed that Edward may be cut off in his pride, and he shall be cut off! I have prayed that his race may be extinguished, and it shall be so! I have prayed that all dear to him may perish, and they shall perish miserably!"

"Oh, madame, this is too terrible!" cried Isidore, trembling and turning pale.

"What is it to thee, if they perish?" said Margaret. "Thou art nought to him —ha?"

"No, madame; but such imprecations are treasonable, and I ought not to listen to them."

“Repeat them to thy master,” said Margaret, haughtily.

“No, madame,” replied Isidore; “he shall hear nought from me likely to exasperate him against you. The king’s feelings towards you are now kindly, and I would not change them.”

“I would rather he hated me than loved me,” said Margaret, “I am not so abject as to ask his pity. Fallen as I am, I know he fears me still.”

“Calm yourself, I beseech you, gracious madame,” said Isidore, after a pause, “and listen to me. I have said that I bring you good news.”

“Is Edward on his death-bed, or hath the relentless Gloucester been slain?” demanded Margaret, sternly.

“ I have come to announce to you, madame, that your captivity is at an end.”

“ Is this so ?” said Margaret, looking steadfastly at the speaker. “ Then, indeed, Edward of York is greatly changed, for I thought that naught but self-interest could move that heart of stone. How came this to pass ? He hath not done it, I am well assured, of his own free will.”

“ King Louis hath agreed to pay a ransom of fifty thousand crowns for your liberation, madame,” said Isidore.

“ Then I owe nothing to Edward,” cried Margaret, joyfully. “ ‘Tis to Louis I am indebted for freedom.”

“ ‘Tis to your august father, King René, that you owe your liberation, gracious madame,” said Isidore. “ To accomplish this, he has ceded Provence to Louis.”

"Has the king, my father, made this great sacrifice for me?" cried Margaret.
"Oh, this is too much!"

And sinking into the chair, she covered her face with her hands, and wept aloud and unrestrainedly.

These were the first tears she had shed since she beheld the body of her murdered husband borne on a bier from the Tower to be exhibited at Saint Paul's, and they greatly relieved her.

Isidore turned aside his head, unable to control his emotion.

Margaret was the first to break the silence. Scarcely conscious that she was not alone, she murmured :

"Why has my father done this? 'Tis too much — too much! I have cost him his beautiful Provence—his Provence that

he loved so well! He has given up that sunny land, with its vines and olives, and cities near the bright blue main, that he may embrace me once more! He does not know that I have grown old—that I am no longer the fair daughter he doted on. He should have let me die here in this prison-chamber, and kept his dear Provence."

"You are dearer to King René than Provence, madame," said Isidore, turning round, and gazing at her with streaming eyes. "I am sure your royal father would have died of grief if he had not beheld you again."

"I thank thee for the words, gentle youth," said Margaret, much moved. "Though thou wearest the livery of my deadly enemy, thou hast a tender heart."

And she extended her hand to him. Isidore bent down, and reverently pressed it to his lips.

“I would thou hadst a better master, gentle youth,” said Margaret. “I cannot ask you to go with me; nor is it likely thou wouldest share my fortunes, if I did.”

“I cannot leave the king, madame,” said Isidore.

“Then let me give thee one piece of counsel,” said Margaret. “Make the most of thy present fortune. Assuredly, thou wilt not have Edward long.”

“Oh, madame! fill me not with these direful forebodings, I entreat you! I should die if I lost the king.”

“Die if you lost him!” exclaimed Margaret. “Let me look more narrowly at thee,” she added, seizing Isidore’s hand.

“ ‘Tis as I suspected. Thou art a woman! Thou art Edward’s beautiful favourite, Jane Shore! Nay, deny it not. I heard thou hadst accompanied him in his expedition to France, in male attire.”

“ Suffer me to depart, gracious madame,” said Jane. “ I have no more to say.”

“ But I have more to say to thee,” rejoined Margaret, still detaining her. “ Did thy master send thee to insult me? Had I not been a prisoner, thou wouldest not have dared approach me. I would have had thee thrust from my presence.”

“ Madame, my desire has been to spare you pain. I deemed my disguise sufficient, and did not for a moment suppose you would recognise me.”

“ I recognised thee not. Thou hast be-

trayed thyself," said Margaret. "But thou hast learned something from me—something thou wilt not forget. My lips have pronounced thy fate. Thou art dear to Edward—very dear, it may be. Thou shalt perish miserably."

"Recall your words, gracious madame, I implore you!" cried Jane. "I have done nothing to offend you. On the contrary, my desire has been to serve you. From the bottom of my heart I have pitied you——"

"Thou pity me!" cried Margaret, with sovereign scorn. "I would not have thy pity. Back to thy lord and master, and tell him all I have said. Bid him act as he will. He can send the merciless Gloucester, if he desires, to slay me. I am

defenceless, and a prisoner, but I have been a queen, and I will brook no insult. Begone!"

So imperious was her tone, and so energetic her gesture, that Jane attempted no remonstrance ; but stepped back to the barred door of the prison-chamber, and tapped against it. It was instantly opened by the gaoler, and she departed.

II.

HOW CLARENCE REVEALED HIS DESIGNS TO JANE.

ON his return from the inglorious expedition to France, enriched by the large sum paid him by the wily Louis the Eleventh, Edward, always addicted to the pleasures of the table, gave himself up to ease and enjoyment.

At Windsor Castle, where he kept his court, there was now continual feasting and revelry. Grand banquets and entertainments were of almost daily occurrence, and

the luxurious monarch passed his time in a constant round of pleasure.

So indolent and enervated did he become by these habits of self-indulgence, that he neglected all hardy exercises—seldom hunted, though he had heretofore been passionately fond of the chase—and scarcely ever appeared in the tilt-yard, though he was the most expert joustier of his day.

Worse than all, he neglected public affairs, for he now disliked anything that gave him trouble, and left their management to the queen, who displayed consummate ability in directing all matters entrusted to her care. She had now obtained a complete ascendancy over her consort, and maintained it to the last.

The only person who strove to rouse the king from the indolent state into which he

had sunk was Jane, but she was unsuccessful in her efforts.

At that time, the Court was divided into two parties, strongly opposed to each other; the most powerful and the most numerous consisting of the new nobility, created by the influence of the queen, and, consequently, devoted to her interests.

At the head of this party was her brother, Earl Rivers, whom she had contrived to marry to the richest heiress in the kingdom, and who was now governor to her son, the young Prince of Wales. Next in importance to Lord Rivers was the Marquis of Dorset, the queen's eldest son by her first marriage, who had been recently appointed Constable of the Tower, and keeper of the king's treasures.

Most of the old nobility had been banished

from Court at the instance of the queen, who desired their removal on account of their supposed hostility to herself; but three of her avowed enemies still enjoyed the king's favour—namely, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord High Constable; Lord Hastings, Grand Chamberlain; and Lord Stanley.

Singular to relate, the queen manifested no jealousy whatever towards her inconstant husband's beautiful favourite, and even went so far as to conciliate her; frequent conferences taking place between them in private at the Hunting Lodge, where Jane resided.

Edward had now been for several months at Windsor, which might not inaptly be described as the Castle of Indolence, when the Duke of Clarence, who had absented himself from Court in consequence of some

affront offered him by the queen, suddenly re-appeared at Court.

He was unaccompanied by the duchess, whom he had been obliged to leave at Ludlow Castle in Shropshire, on account of the feeble state of her health.

Edward welcomed him with his accustomed cordiality ; but the queen received him with marked coldness. She regarded him with distrust, having received information that he was secretly plotting against the king.

On the morning after his arrival at the castle, the duke paid a formal visit to Mistress Shore, who resided, as heretofore, at the Hunting Lodge, and was received by her with as much ceremony as if she had been queen. She was splendidly dressed, and looked surprisingly well ; and Clarence

really thought, as he failed not to tell her, that she quite eclipsed the most exalted lady at Court in beauty.

Jane accepted the compliment, but did not appear much gratified by it. She disliked the duke, for she was well aware of his insincerity.

There was little resemblance, either in person or manner, between Clarencee and his royal brother. Yet the duke was very handsome, and possessed a fine figure. But his features had a sinister expression, and his manner was haughty and repelling, though not wanting in dignity. His habiliments were of the richest velvet, and his girdle and cap blazed with diamonds.

None of the haughtiness of which we have just spoken was perceptible in his deportment towards Jane. On the con-

trary, he was extremely deferential to her ; so much so, as to excite her suspicion.

“ I am sorry to hear the duchess is unwell, my lord,” she said, as she motioned him to a seat. “ I trust it is only a slight indisposition.”

“ She is suffering from extreme debility,” replied Clarence. “ She has not left her couch for a month. She is under the care of Ankaret Twynhyo, a young woman of extraordinary skill, who understands her case perfectly.”

“ You are fortunate in having such a nurse, my lord,” rejoined Jane. “ Methinks you called her Ankaret Twynhyo. ’Tis a singular name. She cannot be an English woman.”

“ No ; she is from Ghent, and was recommended to us by my sister, the Duchess of

Burgundy. She is as well skilled in medicine as a physician, and I have the greatest faith in her. If any one can save the duchess, Ankaret can."

"I fear, from what you now say, my lord, that the duchess must be dangerously ill," remarked Jane.

"I hope not," replied Clarence. "But she seems to lose strength daily. However, everything will be done for her by Ankaret. But let us speak of the king. He does not look well, and is much changed since I saw him last. What ails him?"

"Indolence, my lord; nothing but indolence," replied Jane. "You will render him a great service if you can induce him to take more exercise."

“If you have failed, madame, who have more influence over him than any one else, how can I hope to succeed? Perhaps,” he said, with a singular smile, “a fresh insurrection might rouse him to activity. But I cannot get up one merely to effect his cure. The consequences of such a step, though beneficial to him, might be fatal to myself.”

“I desire no such violent remedy, my lord,” replied Jane. “But you are right. A rebellion would infallibly restore his energies.”

“Unluckily there are no rebels left,” observed Clarence. “All the Lancastrians are slain, except Harry of Richmond, and he is held in captivity by the Duke of Bretagne.”

“I quite despair of rousing the king,” remarked Jane. “All my efforts have proved fruitless.”

“I do not wonder you are uneasy on his majesty’s account, madame,” said Clarence. “I am told he commits too many excesses, and drinks far too much of the good wine of Chalosse sent him by Louis. If he be not checked—and who shall check him since you cannot?—most assuredly he will be seized by a sudden apoplexy.”

“You alarm me, my lord!” cried Jane.

“I do not wish to alarm you, madame,” pursued the duke; “but you ought to be prepared for such an event, since it is highly probable. Consider what would then be your position!”

She looked earnestly at him, but did not speak.

“ You will always have a friend in me, madame,” he said, with a certain deliberation.

“ And in the queen, too, my lord !” cried Jane.

“ 'Twere best not to calculate too much upon her majesty,” said the duke. “ In the event of the king's sudden death—which Heaven forbid!—great confusion would ensue, and great changes take place. The two princes would be set aside. By right, the crown belongs to me. I will not disturb Edward, but I will not allow his son to succeed him.”

Astonishment kept Jane silent, and the duke went on.

“ As I have intimated, Edward has no title to the crown. It can be proved that he is not the son of my father, the Duke of

York. Neither is he lawfully married to her whom he styles his ‘queen.’ A former wife is yet living—the Lady Eleanor Butler—to whom he was privately wedded by the Bishop of Bath, who can prove the marriage.”

“ You amaze me, my lord!” cried Jane.

“ From what I have stated,” pursued the duke, “ you will see that the children of Elizabeth Woodville cannot succeed to the throne. My title is incontestable. Behold this document, madame.” And as he spoke, he took a parchment from his breast. “ This is an authentic copy of the Act of Parliament passed when the Earl of Warwick was next heir to the crown after the male issue of Henry the Sixth. King Henry died in the Tower, as you know. Prince Edward,

his only son, was slain at Tewkesbury. I am Edward's successor. I ought now to be king—and, in effect, I am king. For many reasons, I shall leave my brother Edward in quiet possession. But when the throne becomes vacant—as it will be ere long—I shall occupy it; not his son!"

A brief pause ensued, after which the duke said, "Mark me, the Act has never been repealed, and is therefore still in force. I pray you look at it, madame. Convince yourself that I have spoken the truth."

"I do not desire to look at the Act, my lord," she replied. "You must convince others of the legality of your title, not me."

"I have already done so, madame," he replied, replacing the parchment in his

doublet. “ All the old nobility are satisfied, and will support me. Besides, I can raise an army in the North.”

“ Be not too sure of that, my lord ; be not too sure that the old nobility will support you,” cried Jane. “ ‘Tis possible you may not survive the king, your brother, whose youthful son you desire to supplant. Heaven may thwart your designs. Your imprudence in divulging your scheme to me may cost you your head !”

“ And you intend to betray me to the king, madame ?” said Clarence.

“ I shall reveal all you have said to me, my lord,” she rejoined. “ You cannot complain. I did not invoke your confidence, and have given you no pledge of secrecy.”

“ Beware what you do, madame !” said Clarence, sternly. “ You imagine you hold

my life in your hands, but you are mistaken. I exacted no promise of secrecy from you, because I knew you would not be bound by it; but you will be silent when you learn what you have to fear. Make the revelation to Edward, and I will meet it with a counter-charge that will ruin you for ever in his esteem! Trust me, your wisest course will be to become my ally. The time will soon come when I shall be able to reward my friends, and I shall not forget those who serve me well. Several of the king's confidants are leagued with me against the queen and her family. Her enemies must naturally be my friends."

"But I am not the queen's enemy," said Jane.

"That will not pass with me!" exclaimed

Clarence, incredulously. “ Again I ask, may I count upon you as an ally?”

“ After a moment’s reflection, Jane said, “ What would you have me do?”

“ Nothing that will give you trouble,” he replied. “ Certain matters must come to your knowledge that it may be desirable I should know, especially when I am absent from Court.”

“ But how communicate them to you?” she asked.

“ I have a spy in the king’s household, who will convey a letter safely to me,” replied the duke.

“ His name?” asked Jane.

“ Baldwin,” replied the duke.

“ Can he be trusted?” she asked.

“ Perfectly,” answered Clarence. “ He is devoted to me.”

“Here comes the king!” exclaimed Jane, as the door was suddenly thrown open by an usher.

“Be silent, on your life, madame!” said Clarence, in a low tone. “I am playing too deep a game not to have calculated all chances. The slightest indiscretion on your part will only precipitate matters.”

Next moment, Edward entered the room, attended by his jester, Malbouche.

III.

HOW THE KING SHOOK OFF HIS LETHARGY.

PERSONALLY, Edward was not much changed ; but he had an indolent and enervated appearance, that proclaimed the luxurious habits in which he indulged. He was arrayed in a robe of the richest velvet, lined with fur, and his jerkin was magnificently embroidered.

After returning the obeisances made him, he sank into a fauteuil, as if the exertion he had just undergone had been too much for him.

“Bring me a cup of wine,” he said to a page, who still remained in attendance.

“If I might venture to interfere, I would advise your majesty to refrain till dinner,” said Jane.

“The walk from the castle has made me thirsty,” he replied, emptying the large silver flagon brought him by a page. “Tis right good Gascoigne wine,” he added. “Louis may have deceived me in some things; but he has sent me good wine. He has no such wine as this, I am told, at his own table.”

“Louis drinks very sparingly, and mingles his wine with water,” observed Jane; “and it would be well if your majesty would follow his example.”

“Nay, by my faith! that I will never do,” cried Edward. “What! spoil wine

like that I have just drunk, with water! That were indeed a folly, of which not even Malbouche would be guilty!"

"Nay, my liege," rejoined the jester; "I have just made a vow that I will touch no wine for three months."

"What induced thee to make a vow so foolish?" remarked Edward.

"Because I drank too much yesterday, my liege," replied Malbouche.

"For the same reason, I might make a like vow," said the king, laughing.

"Twere well for your majesty if you did, and kept your vow rigorously," said Jane.

"What! Would you have me forswear wine altogether?" rejoined Edward.

"I would," said Jane.

"That were a penance far too severe," observed Clarence. "When his majesty has

finished the famous Chalosse sent him by King Louis, he may think about it. My wine, by preference, is Malmsey."

"Say you so, brother?" cried Edward. "Happily, I can suit your taste. More wine!" he added to the page. A cup of Malmsey for the Duke of Clarence."

"And for your majesty?"

"Chalosse," replied the king. "Malmsey is too sweet for me."

Before the page went forth, Jane called him to her. Presently he returned, bearing two goblets on a salver, one of which he offered to the duke.

"Like you the wine, brother?" inquired Edward.

"'Tis excellent!" cried Clarence. "No other wine shall pass my lips, if I can help it. My last draught shall be of Malmsey."

"I trust your wish may be gratified, brother," observed the king. "'Tis better than some vile medicinal potion. Ah! thou hast poisoned me!" he ejaculated, as he well-nigh emptied the cup. "What hast thou given me?"

"Cold water, an' please your majesty," replied the page, scarcely able to repress a smile at the grimace made by the king.

"Nay, your majesty must chide me," remarked Jane. "He merely obeyed my order. Finish the cup, I pray you. 'Twill clear your head for business."

"I have no business to attend to," replied the king. "The day shall be entirely devoted to amusement."

"As all your majesty's are, and as all mine should be, were I king," remarked Malbouche.

"Will you not ride in the park?" said Jane. "The day is delightful."

"No; 'tis too hot. I am better here," said Edward, indolently. "Bring your lute, and sing to me—the while my brother Clarence and myself amuse ourselves with cards and dice."

"Ever some trifling amusement," sighed Jane, preparing to obey. "Nothing will rouse him."

Just at this moment, the door was again opened, and the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Hastings were ushered in.

"Welcome, my lords," cried Edward. "You are just in time for a game at cards. Sit down, I pray you."

"My liege," replied Buckingham, "we are sorry to interrupt you; but you must

needs return with us to the castle. A council has been hastily summoned, and your presence at it is absolutely necessary."

"Be it what it may, you must dispense with me," replied Edward. "I am not in the mood for business."

"'Tis a matter of the utmost importance, my liege," remonstrated Hastings. "The expenses of your household have largely increased, and must be provided for. No further burden can safely be laid upon the nation."

"Then the grants from the crown must be resumed," said Edward. "There is no other way to raise money. We have levied large sums from the clergy."

"What do I hear?" cried Clarence, starting up. "The crown grants resumed!"

Then I shall lose my lands. Your majesty cannot contemplate such a step?"

"Money must be had, brother," replied Edward, calmly. "My household, as you have just heard, is expensive."

"But the expenses are not to be defrayed by me," cried Clarence, angrily. "I protest against a measure so unjust—vehemently protest against it."

"The council will listen to your objections, brother," said Edward, calmly.

"But they will be guided by your majesty," rejoined the duke. "Be their decision what it may, I will not part with my possessions without a struggle."

"Reserve what you have to say for the council, brother," said Edward. "Come with me. I promise you a fair hearing."

Then, rising from his seat, and instantaneously resuming all his wonted dignity of manner, he said to the two nobles :

“ My lords, I attend you.”

By a powerful effort, he had completely shaken off his lethargy. His figure seemed loftier, and his countenance assumed a wholly different expression from that which it had just worn.

The transformation was so remarkable, that the beholders were struck by it, and none more so than Jane, who gazed at him with admiration.

As he turned to bid her adieu, she said to him in a low tone :

“ If I never beheld your majesty again I should rejoice at this blessed change !”

Edward then went forth, accompanied by the Duke of Clarence and the two nobles, and proceeded through the vineyard to the castle.

IV.

IN WHAT MANNER THE DUCHESS OF CLARENCE WAS POISONED BY ANKARET TWYNHYO; AND OF THE FATE OF THE POISONER.

As the Duke of Clarence entered the upper ward of the castle with the king, a messenger, who had just arrived, approached him, and presented him with a letter.

Struck by the man's looks, the duke said to him :

“ Though bring’st ill news, I fear ?”

“ My lord,” replied the messenger, “ when

I left Ludlow Castle the duchess had not many hours to live. Mistress Ankaret Twnyhyo ordered me to convey this letter with all speed to your grace, and I have come as swiftly as I could."

"Does Mistress Ankaret give no hopes of the duchess's recovery?" said Clarence.

"None, my lord!" replied the messenger.
"Tis scarce probable you will find her grace alive on your return."

"I will start at once!" cried the duke.
"Heaven grant I may not arrive too late!
Your majesty has heard the sad tidings brought by this man, and will excuse my hasty departure."

"Not only excuse it, brother, but urge it," said Edward. "Leave the letter with me, that I may read what the nurse says."

"I have not yet opened the letter, my liege," said Clarence, uneasily.

"No matter!" cried Edward. "There can be no secrets in it. Give it me."

And he took the letter from the duke. To hide his confusion, Clarence hurried away, without taking formal leave of the king, or bidding adieu to the two nobles.

"I am alarming myself without cause," he thought. "Ankaret would be sure to write most guardedly. Yet she might say something that would awaken Edward's suspicions. 'Tis unlucky the letter should fall into his hands"

Thus ruminating, he mounted his steed and quitted the castle, attended by the half-dozen retainers he had brought with him.

As soon as he was gone, the king re-

marked, with a singular smile, to the two nobles :

“ If the duchess dies—and it seems she will die—Clarence will soon seek another spouse, and I foretell that his choice will fall on Mary of Burgundy. When the duke was slain at Nanci, and his immense territories devolved on his daughter, I felt sure my greedy brother would have grasped at such a prize, had not his hand been tied. But now he is free—or will be free—there is nothing to prevent him from trying to obtain the great heiress. But he has counted without me, for I shall thwart his scheme.”

Both his hearers smiled at the king’s remark.

“ Let us see what the letter contains,” pursued Edward, opening it.

As he scanned its contents, his brow grew dark, and his looks proclaimed that he had made some startling discovery.

“ Beyond doubt, this Ankaret Twynhyo is a poisoner !” he exclaimed. “ Mark what she says in this letter, and judge : ‘ The draught wrought as expected, and as your grace desired. For a short time, the duchess seemed to rally, but she soon grew worse again, and is now rapidly sinking. I shall try the effect of another draught—but with little hope of saving her.’ Here is a plain intimation that the poisonous draught has done its work.”

“ ‘Tis not quite plain to me, my liege,” remarked Hastings. “ The words may bear a different construction.”

“ I do not think so,” cried Edward. “ The woman shall be arrested and inter-

rogated. I have no doubt whatever of her guilt. I am certain she has administered poison to the duchess."

Thereupon he proceeded to the council-chamber.

Early next morning, the Duke of Clarence, who had continued his rapid journey throughout the night, came in sight of the towers of Ludlow Castle.

Picturesquely situated on the banks of the River Corve, near its junction with the Teme, this commanding pile, which formed one of the noblest baronial residences in the kingdom, had been occupied by Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, Clarence's father; but after the battle of Wakefield, at which the Duke of York was slain, the castle was dismantled by Henry the Sixth, and for some time neglected.

At a subsequent period, it was bestowed by Edward on his brother Clarence, who restored it to all its pristine splendour, and placed a strong garrison within its walls. Here the ambitious and treacherous duke planned his schemes for securing the crown.

On arriving at the castle, Clarence's first inquiries were as to the state of the duchess, and on learning that she still breathed, he hurried to her room.

In a carved oak bedstead, in a richly furnished chamber, lay the emaciated figure of the once beautiful Isabella, eldest daughter of the great Earl of Warwick.

A mortal pallor overspread her countenance, and the damps of death were gathering on her brow. It was evident dissolu-

tion was at hand, and that the vital spark was about to quit its earthly tabernacle.

The duchess was speechless, and incapable of movement, but her eyes were open, and were turned towards the duke as he entered the chamber. On her breast was laid a small crucifix, but she was unable to raise it.

Amid the deep hush of the chamber could be heard the voice of a priest, who was reciting the prayers for a departing soul.

Partly concealed by the richly embroidered curtains, stood Ankaret Twynhyo, a tall, dark-complexioned, handsome woman, of middle age.

She had a very striking countenance, owing to the peculiar expression of her large black eyes. She was plainly attired

in a kirtle of dark red camlet, and wore a white coverchief.

Clarence saw her as he entered, but avoided her glance, and looked only at the duchess, whose dying gaze was fixed upon him.

He took his wife's hand, but it was cold, and could not return his pressure. He questioned her by his looks, and she tried to respond, for she evidently knew him.

In vain ! The agony came on, and the light within her eyes was extinguished.

The duke threw himself on his knees beside the bed ; and again there was a deep hush, broken only by his sobs, and by the voice of the priest.

At a later hour, the duke was alone with Ankaret, in his cabinet. He questioned her

as to the contents of the letter she had sent him.

“Has it not reached you?” she cried.
“I ordered Colville to deliver it into your grace’s own hands.”

“It was snatched from me by the king before I could open it,” said Clarence.
“Heaven grant there was nothing in it to damage me!”

“It is unlucky the letter should fall into the king’s hands,” said Ankaret. “But your grace need have no uneasiness. I wrote most carefully.”

“If the king’s suspicions are aroused, they are not easily allayed,” said Clarence.
“It may be that you have some noxious drugs, or medicines, in your possession. If so, destroy them!”

“Fear nothing, my lord,” she replied. “The poisons I use are not concocted in the ordinary manner. This small phial, which I keep concealed in my breast, was given me by an Italian, and a few drops of it are sufficient for the purpose, as you have seen. Methinks I have earned my reward.”

“You have,” replied Clarence, shuddering. “Here are the thousand golden crowns I promised you,” he added, giving her a bag of money. “I would counsel your immediate departure, but that flight would excite suspicion.”

“I will remain until after the duchess’s funeral,” said Ankaret. “Till then, I will leave this money with your grace. If search be made, so large a sum must not be found upon me.”

“ You are right,” rejoined Clarence, as he took back the bag.

Scarcely were the words uttered, than an usher entered, and stated that an officer from the king was without, and desired to speak with the duke.

“ Is he alone?” asked Clarence, vainly endeavouring to conceal his uneasiness.

“ No, my lord ; he has a guard with him,” replied the usher.

“ Admit him!” said the duke.

Accordingly, the officer was introduced.

Bowing respectfully to the duke, he said :

“ My duty compels me to intrude upon your grace. I hold a warrant from his majesty for the arrest of Ankaret Twynhyo, one of your grace’s female servants.”

“On what charge?” demanded the duke, haughtily.

“On a most serious charge!” replied the officer.

“Give it a name, sir?” cried Clarence.

“She is suspected of having poisoned the duchess, my lord,” replied the officer. “Her grace, I am told, has just departed this life.”

“But she has died from natural causes—not by poison,” said the duke. “Ankaret is totally innocent of the heinous crime imputed to her.”

“I trust, my lord, she may be able to establish her innocence,” rejoined the officer.

“But the king believes her guilty.”

“He can have no proof of her guilt,” said the duke.

"Pardon me, my lord ; his majesty has proof under her own handwriting."

"That cannot be," cried Ankaret. "I have committed no offence. I have written nothing to criminate myself."

Then throwing herself at the duke's feet, she exclaimed, "Your grace will not deliver me to certain destruction."

"I cannot protect you," said Clarence.
"But you have nothing to fear."

"Yes ; I have the torture to fear !" she replied, springing to her feet ; "and I will never endure it ! I will rather die here !"

And, placing the phial to her lips, she emptied its contents.

"What have you done, miserable woman ?" cried the officer, astounded.

"Escaped the rack !" she replied. "Now

you may take me with you, if you will. But you cannot bring me before the king. I defy you!" she added, with a fearful laugh.

"Have you naught to declare before you die, woman?" said the officer, noticing an appalling change in her countenance. "This act proves your guilt. But were you instigated to the dreadful deed?"

Clarence awaited her reply in terror, fearing she would accuse him.

"I confess that I poisoned the duchess," she said.

"Had you an accomplice?" demanded the officer. "Answer, as you will answer to the Supreme Judge, before whom you will presently appear."

She made an effort to answer, but the

quick poison had already done its work, and she fell dead into the arms of the officer.

“ Saved !” mentally ejaculated Clarence.

V.

THE CHASE OF THE MILK-WHITE HART IN WARGRAVE PARK.

IN those days, when so many strange and terrible events occurred, the death of the unfortunate Duchess of Clarence was soon forgotten; and though the strongest suspicion attached to the duke, Ankaret's dying statement, as reported by the officer, served to clear him from all participation in the crime.

But the king had judged correctly. The duchess had not been laid a month within

the tomb, when Clarencee, fearful of having the great prize snatched from him if he delayed longer, solicited the hand of Mary of Burgundy, and his suit being supported by the mother-in-law of the young heiress, who was likewise his own sister, and devoted to his interests, he would probably have succeeded, but for the determined opposition of Edward.

With such an accession of power as would have been afforded him by this alliance with the heiress of Burgundy, the ambitious duke would have become far more powerful than his royal brother desired, and Edward would not therefore allow the marriage to take place.

Clarencee's rage at this grievous disappointment knew no bounds, and, carried away by passion, he was indiscreet enough

to threaten vengeance against the king. These menaces were reported to Edward, and the duke's ruin was resolved upon. But a pretext must be afforded for his destruction, and he was allowed to withdraw from Court, and retire to Ludlow Castle, where he occupied himself in planning an insurrection.

Edward was quite aware of his schemes, for he had spies in the duke's household ; but he gave himself no concern about him, and abided his time.

Among the duke's confidants, and known to be privy to his schemes, was Sir Thomas Burdett, owner of Wargrave, a large park adjoining Windsor Forest, and well stocked with deer.

By this time, Edward, though he still feasted too frequently, had resumed his

former active habits, and spent the greater part of each day in hunting, hawking, and other sports. On such occasions he was generally accompanied by Jane, who was an admirable equestrian, and, despite her slight frame, could stand a great deal of fatigue.

One day he announced his intention of hunting in Wargrave Park, and set out betimes from Windsor, as the place was somewhat distant. He was accompanied by a large and splendid party, among whom were the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Hastings, and other nobles ; but no other lady was with him, except Jane.

Edward seemed rather preoccupied as he rode through the forest, and it is certain he was not thinking wholly of the chase ; but whatever grave matter engrossed his

thoughts, he did not mention it to Jane, though he now and then exchanged a serious word with Buckingham and Hastings.

Sir Thomas Burdett, in whose park he was about to hunt, was a man of fierce and ungovernable temper, and had been engaged in many private quarrels. He had fought at the battle of Barnet, under the Earl of Warwick; but his estates were saved from confiscation by Clarence, to whom he owed a large debt of gratitude, and was anxious to repay it.

Wargrave Park, as already intimated, was well stocked with deer, and Sir Thomas being a great hunter, cared not how many stags he killed—the more the merrier; but amid the herds, there was a milk-white

hart that he loved, and would never allow to be chased.

So tame was the beautiful animal, that it would come to feed out of Sir Thomas's hand, and was generally seen beneath the oaks in front of the mansion.

As a safeguard, and to show that it belonged to him, he hung a chain of gold round its neck, and the hart seemed proud of the decoration.

This gentle creature, never hitherto disturbed by huntsmen, Edward resolved to kill, his object being to excite the anger of its owner. Had Jane been aware of the king's design, she would have striven to dissuade him from it, and would certainly not have accompanied him.

When Edward entered Wargrave Park,

Sir Thomas Burdett, wholly unsuspicous of his purpose, came forth, and placed all his deer at his majesty's disposition, promising him excellent sport.

"You have a milk-white hart, I understand, Sir Thomas?" remarked Edward.

The knight replied in the affirmative, and pointed out the animal beneath the trees.

Thereupon, the king rode with Jane towards the spot, followed by the huntsmen and hounds. Long before their approach, the whole herd took to flight, except the gentle hart, which lifted up its noble head, and looked at them unconcernedly.

"Oh! how much I should like to have that lovely creature!" cried Jane. "But Sir Thomas will never consent to part with it."

“He must part with it!” remarked Edward, significantly.

“Ah! here it comes!” exclaimed Jane, as the stag tripped forward to meet them.

But as it got within half a bowshot of the party, it stopped. Something had alarmed it.

After gazing for a moment, as she thought, wistfully, at Jane, the stag dashed off.

At a sign from the king, the horns were blown, and the hounds unleashed, and the whole party started in pursuit.

Unable to restrain her steed, Jane was obliged to keep near the king.

“You do not mean to kill that stag, my liege?” she cried. “’Twere a cruel deed!”

Edward made no reply, but his looks proclaimed that such was his intent.

Jane rode on, occasionally renewing her entreaties, but the king continued obdurate.

Never before had such a chase been seen, either in Wargrave Park or Windsor Forest, and those who witnessed it were wonderstruck at the swiftness of the beautiful stag, as it speeded along the glades, and passed through the groves.

Jane thought it would escape, but on reaching the limits of the park, it turned, and, after rapidly retracing its course, made for the mansion, hoping to find refuge with its master.

But before the terrified animal could reach this place of safety, it was pulled

down by the hounds, and killed by Edward's own hand.

Taking the chain from the hart's neck, the king gave it to Jane, and bade her wear it.

"I like not the gift, my liege," she said, perceiving that the chain was sprinkled with blood. "I fear it will bring me ill luck."

"Nay, by my faith, you shall wear it," said Edward. "It will remind you of this merry chase."

Placing the bugle to his lips, he winded a mort.

Next moment, the whole party came up, and gathered round the slaughtered stag.

At the same time Sir Thomas Burdett

reached the spot, almost distraught with grief and rage.

Looking down at the poor beast, he exclaimed, in the bitterness of his heart :

“ Must thou be the victim of his savage sport ? Would that thy horns were plunged deep in his body who slew thee ! ”

Scarcely had the imprudent words escaped him, than he was seized by a couple of huntsmen.

“ Ha, traitor ! ha, villain ! ” exclaimed Edward, furiously. “ Thy tongue ought to be plucked out for those treasonable words ! ”

“ Pardon him, I implore you, my liege,” interposed Jane. “ Ask grace of the king, Sir Thomas,” she added to the knight, “ and he will grant it to you.”

“ Let him take my life, if he will,” re-

joined Burdett, sternly. “ I doubt not he seeks it, or he would not have done me this grievous wrong.”

“ Peace, sir,” said Jane. “ You aggravate your offence. Humble yourself, and I will intercede for you.”

“ I want not your intercession. I would not owe my life to you !” cried Sir Thomas, scornfully.

“ Thou art a vile traitor, and shalt die !” cried Edward, as he sprang into the saddle.

“ I go to my doom,” said Burdett. “ But mark me, sire ! This deed will not be unavenged !”

“ Ha ! say’st thou ?” cried Edward, hoping to draw something further from him. “ Who will avenge thee ?”

“ Heaven !” replied the knight. “ Heaven will avenge me !”

Then, turning to the men who held him, he said :

“A moment, and I will go with you.”

And as they released him, he knelt down beside the hart, and patted its forehead gently, muttering the while :

“They have killed thee, my poor beast, that they might kill thy master!”

After taking this farewell of his favourite, which moved Jane greatly, if it moved no one else, he arose, and delivered himself to his captors.

Meantime, the king had given orders that he should be taken to his own house, being strictly guarded the while, and then brought as a prisoner to Windsor Castle.

Thus ended the chase of the milk-white hart in Wargrave Park ; and it was long

afterwards remembered, because divers calamities were traced to it.

As Jane rode back through the forest, she was much dispirited, and Edward vainly endeavoured to cheer her.

That night she dreamed that the chase was renewed, but it ended differently. Hotly pursued, the hart stood at bay, and gored the king dangerously with its horns.

As to the unhappy knight, he was first taken to Windsor Castle, as had been enjoined, and was then arraigned before the judges, charged with high treason, condemned to death, and executed within two days.

VI.

OF THE QUARREL BETWEEN THE KING AND CLARENCE, AND
HOW THE DUKE WAS ARRESTED.

THE Duke of Clarence was at Ludlow Castle when this tragical event occurred, and so incensed was he when he heard the particulars of his adherent's execution, that he set out at once for Windsor to demand an explanation of the king.

Nor had his anger abated by the time of his arrival at the castle. He sought an

immediate audience of the king, and obtained it.

Edward was alone in his cabinet, when Clarence was ushered into his presence. Perceiving at once, from his brother's looks and deportment, that he was scarcely able to control himself, he resolved to take advantage of any indiscretion on the duke's part.

"Your majesty will not doubt what has brought me hither," said Clarence, in a haughty tone. "I have come to demand from you an account of the death of my faithful adherent, Sir Thomas Burdett?"

"Tis plain you have not heard what has happened, brother," replied the king. "Your adherent has been found guilty of high treason."

“And has been put to death, because he uttered a few hasty words when you killed his favourite deer!” said Clarence. “No tyrant could have acted with greater severity!”

“It may be well you should put some guard on your own speech, brother,” rejoined Edward, sternly. “Sir Thomas Burdett was justly executed. ’Twas proved at his trial, by his servants, that he practised magic arts—that he fashioned small leaden images of ourself and the princes, our sons, and melted them, praying we might consume in like manner; and that he calculated our nativity, predicting death on a certain day. For these practices—not altogether for his treasonable speech—was he condemned to die.”

“I do not believe in these idle charges,”

cried Clarence. “The servants who accused him of sorcery were suborned. Sir Thomas was loyal and true.”

“In vowing fidelity to you, brother, he did not reserve his allegiance to me,” rejoined Edward.

“The accusations are false, I repeat,” cried Clarence. “His trial was a mere mockery, for his destruction was resolved upon. This is shown by the haste with which the affair was conducted.”

“Dare you say this to me?” cried Edward.

“Ay; and I dare tell you that you have acted unwisely as well as unjustly in this hasty procedure, and that you may have reason to regret what you have done.”

“You threaten, methinks, brother!” remarked the king.

“ This deadly blow has been aimed against me,” said Clarencee, giving way to ungovernable passion. “ These false charges have been brought against Burdett in order that they may prejudice me, but I repel them with scorn and indignation. Is this your gratitude? To me you owe your re-establishment on the throne, when you had been driven from it. Had I not aided you, Warwick would inevitably have proved the victor at Barnet.”

“ You forget that I should never have had to fight for my kingdom but for your treachery and desertion,” rejoined Edward. “ In pardoning the rebellion for which you ought to have lost your head, I did enough. But I have bestowed favours without end upon you.”

“ You have latterly deprived me of half

my possessions by the intolerable Act of resumption," said Clarence. "Moreover, you have thwarted my marriage with Mary of Burgundy, which the duchess, our sister, had fully arranged. Think you I will tamely submit to such a wrong?"

"I know not—and care not," rejoined Edward, in a tone of indifference.

"I am treated as if I have no title to the crown," cried Clarence; "whereas, my title is superior to your own. There cannot be a doubt that the Duke of York was my father."

"What would you insinuate?" said Edward, fiercely.

"Methinks the inference is sufficiently clear," said Clarence.

"Retract what thou hast said; or, by Saint Mark, I will strike thee dead at my

feet," cried Edward, starting up and drawing his dagger.

Clarence did not blench, but prepared to defend himself.

What might have been the end of this unnatural quarrel, it boots not to consider, but fortunately at this moment Jane entered the cabinet, and, seeing how matters stood, she rushed forward and placed herself between them.

"Hold, my liege!" she exclaimed. "Forget not that the Duke of Clarence is your brother!"

"He has dared to defame his own mother, and merits death at my hand!" said Edward. "But I will not sully my steel with his blood. I will leave him to the executioner."

And he sheathed his dagger.

“The duke cannot mean what he has said, my liege,” cried Jane. “He has spoken in anger. Let him depart, I pray you!”

“No,” replied Edward. “He stirs not hence, save to the Tower. I have forgiven him many injuries; but it would be worse than weakness to forgive him now. His anger has caused him to betray the project he has formed. ‘Tis no less than to disinherⁱt me and my issue.”

“Since you have discovered the design, my liege, ‘tis innocuous,” said Jane. “Clemency may excite better feelings in his breast. Throw yourself at the king’s feet, my lord, and, perchance, he may vouchsafe you a pardon.”

“Never!” cried Clarence. “Let him take my life, if he will. I have been goaded to

madness by great wrongs, and no wonder I have become desperate."

"You hear, my liege," cried Jane. "His highness owns he has been in fault."

"If he sincerely repents, and promises not to offend again, I may be induced to forgive him," said Edward, somewhat mollified. "But let him bend his proud neck."

"Ask not too much, my liege," implored Jane. "Suffer him to depart."

"Bid him return forthwith," said Edward, "and shut himself up in Ludlow Castle, till I grant him liberty. Any infraction of my orders will be visited with death."

"I need not repeat his majesty's commands to your highness," said Jane. "But I would exhort you to make all haste you can to Ludlow Castle."

“ I will take refuge there as in a sanctuary,” said Clarence.

“ But you will find it no sanctuary if you again offend, brother,” said Edward, sternly.
“ Fare you well !”

Clarence made no response ; but, with a haughty reverence, departed.

For some time after he was gone, Edward maintained a moody silence, and Jane did not venture to address him. At length he spoke.

“ Clarence’s nature is wholly faithless,” he said. “ To me he has always been false, and he was equally false to Warwick. He will now commence fresh plots against me.”

“ Let us hope not, my liege,” said Jane. “ At all events, I am glad you pardoned him.”

“I have only pardoned him conditionally,” rejoined the king.

Shortly afterwards, Lord Hastings entered the cabinet, looking very much disturbed.

“I have been sorely tempted to disobey your majesty’s commands, and detain the Duke of Clarence,” he said. “We have abundant proofs that he has been conspiring against you, and if not checked, he is certain to breed confusion, and perhaps cause another insurrection.”

“Such is my own opinion,” said Edward. “But Mistress Shore has pleaded for him, and I have yielded to her entreaties.”

“He is so actively mischievous, that he ought not to be at large, my liege,” said Hastings.

"I have ordered him to return at once to Ludlow Castle, and keep close there," rejoined Edward.

"But you neglected to send a guard with him, my liege," said Hastings. "He has gone to Shene."

"To Shene!" cried Edward. "Follow him thither at once with a dozen men-at-arms. Arrest him, and clap him in the Tower. There he will be quiet, and may plot at his ease, without danger to me."

"My liege!" cried Jane.

"You sue in vain," rejoined Edward. "I am deaf to your entreaties. About the business at once, my lord!"

"Give me the warrant for the duke's arrest, my liege," said Hastings, "and he

shall be lodged within the Tower before night."

This was done, and Hastings set out at once for Shene Palace, where he found the duke, and arrested him.

VII.

HOW CLARENCE WAS IMPRISONED IN THE BOWYER'S
TOWER.

CLARENCE manifested great displeasure at what he termed the king's violation of faith, but he did not offer any resistance, and, his attendants being dismissed, he was conveyed, by water, to the Tower, and placed in a prison-lodging at the rear of the donjon.

The fortification wherein the Duke of Clarence was confined, and which, from

this circumstance, has acquired a peculiarly gloomy celebrity, is situated in an angle at the north of the ancient wall surrounding the inner ward.

The structure is of great strength, and originally consisted of two stories, approached by a circular stone staircase. The basement floor, in which the duke was confined, and which exactly corresponded with the upper room, now demolished, was vaulted and groined, and contained three deep recesses, contrived in the thickness of the walls, and each terminated by a narrow, grated embrasure. Near the ponderous door there was a small cell, likewise formed in the substance of the wall.

The fortification derived its name, as will be readily conjectured, from having been originally the residence of the master-

bowyer, one of the officers of the Tower ; but even at the date of our story, it had long been used as a place of confinement for State prisoners.

In this gloomy prison the ambitious and luxurious Clarence was left to fret.

For a short time he persuaded himself that his royal brother, whom he had so deeply injured, but who had so often forgiven him, would relent and set him free. But his expectation vanished as he reflected upon what he had done, and he blamed his own imprudence. He well knew he had a bitter enemy in the queen, and that she would harden the king's heart against him. Besides, he had many other powerful enemies bent upon his destruction, while his friends were unable to serve him.

He could think of no other person who

would act as a mediator between him and the king except Jane, and hearing she was at Westminster, he contrived to send a message to her. But before she could respond to his appeal, he had a visit from his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, which entirely altered his frame of mind.

Unaware that the deeply dissembling Gloucester secretly aspired to the throne, and, consequently, desired the removal of every obstacle in his way, Clarence confided in him, and when he visited him in his prison, laid bare his secret heart to him.

“ ‘Tis certain I have deeply offended the king, our brother, by seeking to disinherit him and his children,” he said; “but I do not despair of obtaining a pardon, through the instrumentality of Mistress Shore.”

“Do not apply to her, brother,” rejoined the wily Gloucester. “Mistress Shore will do you more harm than good. That she will undertake your cause I nothing doubt. But her previous interference in your behalf displeased the king, and if she troubles him again, all my exertions will be ineffectual. I hope to find a better advocate for you than Mistress Shore.”

“Impossible! She has far more influence with Edward than any one else, and can counteract the queen’s animosity, which I have most reason to dread.”

“What if I secure the queen herself, brother?” said Gloucester. “Already I have spoken with her majesty, who shows a kindly disposition towards you. Upon

that feeling I will work till I have enlisted her sympathies in your behalf, and then you are safe, for the king will not refuse her if she solicits your pardon. But if Mistress Shore steps in beforehand, and torments Edward with importunities, even the queen will fail."

"I should have thought the queen more likely to inflame Edward against me than to pacify him."

"You have to thank me for this favourable change in her sentiments," said Gloucester. "But the utmost caution must be observed, or her enmity may again be aroused. Have naught to do with Mistress Shore, brother—that is my counsel."

"But I have besought Mistress Shore to come to me," said Clarence.

“ ‘Tis well you told me this, or you had spoiled all,” said Gloucester. “ Forbid her to speak to the king—peremptorily forbid her! Heed not giving the minion offence. Dismiss her!”

“ By so doing, I shall make her my enemy.”

“ No matter. You must choose between her and the queen. But I must now leave you.”

“ Your discourse has cheered me greatly, brother,” said Clarence. “ Come again soon, I pray you.”

“ I must not come too often,” replied Gloucester. “ But I have brought you something that will cheer you better than my society. Something to gladden your heart, brother.”

“ What is it? A book? A lute ?” cried Clarence.

Just then, a noise was heard outside.

“ Some one comes,” cried Gloucester.
“ It may be Mistress Shore. I would not meet her. You shall hear from me ere long. Farewell !”

But before he could depart, the door was opened by Dighton, the gaoler, and Jane entered the room, attended by Malbouche.

Bowing haughtily to her, Gloucester was about to pass forth, when the jester said to him :

“ I expected to find your highness here.”

“ How so, knave ?” cried the duke, surprised.

“ Because I fancied you would like to

change places with the duke, your brother," replied Malbouche, with a grin.

"Go to," cried Gloucester. "Thou art a meddling fool!" And he quitted the chamber in some confusion.

VIII.

HOW A BUTT OF MALMSEY WAS SENT TO CLARENCE BY THE
DUKE OF GLOUCESTER.

“I THANK you, madame, for this kindly visit,” said Clarence. “Your sympathy for the unfortunate proves the goodness of your heart.”

“I fear I can render you little assistance, my lord,” said Jane. “The king still continues violently incensed. ‘Tis in vain I endeavour to exculpate you. He will not listen to me. Your enemies are too powerful.”

“One of the worst has just gone forth,” remarked Malbouche.

“My brother! The Duke of Gloucester! I cannot believe it,” cried Clarence.

“ ’Tis true,” said the jester. “He is leagued with the queen against your highness.”

“Thou art mistaken,” exclaimed the duke. “He asserted, even now, that the queen is friendly to me.”

“Alas! my lord, it is not so!” said Jane. “I fear you have but one friend to plead your cause with the king.”

“And Gloucester would have me alienate that friend,” cried Clarence. “Oh, madame, how much I owe you. Without you I were lost.”

“I will save you, my lord, if I can,” said Jane. “I will beg your life on my bended

knees. But I dare not promise that my prayer will be granted."

"Yes, yes, it will!" cried Clarence, eagerly. "The king can refuse you nothing. If he spares me, he may rely on my fidelity and devotion for the future. No more plots, no more insurrections. Let him take back all my possessions. I shall be content with bare life."

"Should your highness be pardoned, as I trust you may be," said Jane, "I am well assured the king will act generously. Your possessions will not be forfeited."

"You give me some hopes, then?" cried Clarence.

"If your enemies prove not too powerful, my lord, I trust I shall prevail," said Jane.

Here an interruption was offered by the

entrance of Sir Robert Brackenbury, the Lieutenant of the Tower.

“ His Grace the Duke of Gloucester hath sent your highness a butt of the choicest malmsey,” said Brackenbury. “ The men are now bringing it hither.”

“ I am half inclined to return the gift,” cried the duke.

“ Nay, my lord, I pray you do not,” said the lieutenant. “ You will offend his grace, and, moreover, the wine will cheer you, and enable you to bear your confinement. Ha! here it comes.”

And as he spoke, a huge cask was pushed into the room—not without some difficulty—by three stout porters.

“ ’Twill incommod your highness if it stand here!” said Brackenbury. “ Place

it in yonder recess," he added, to the porters.

And the men, having fulfilled their task, departed.

"Your highness can now drown your cares!" cried Malbouche, as he gazed at the butt, which completely blocked up the embrasure.

"I can drown myself whenever I am so minded," rejoined Clarence.

The hint did not seem lost on Brackenbury, to judge from the singular expression of his countenance.

"Will it please your highness to taste the wine?" he added. "If so, I will have the cask broached forthwith."

"Not now, Sir Robert," rejoined Clarence.

“Beshrew me, if I would drink a drop of it,” said Malbouche.

“If your highness has any fear, I will act as your taster,” observed Brackenbury.

“Thank you, good Sir Robert,” said Clarence. “If I thought the wine would procure me oblivion, I would drink deeply of it.”

“Avoid it, my lord, if you are wise,” remarked Jane, in a low, significant tone.

Then, turning to the lieutenant, she added, “I will pray you conduct me to the gate, Sir Robert.”

Brackenbury bowed in assent, and immediately afterwards the party quitted the prison, and Clarence was left alone to his reflections.

IX.

HOW CLARENCE WAS TRIED FOR HIGH TREASON AND
CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

WITHIN a week from this date, Clarence was placed at the bar of the House of Lords, charged with high treason, the Duke of Buckingham being appointed high steward for the occasion.

The prosecution being conducted by the king in person, it was evident from the first that the prisoner would be found guilty. So overpowered, indeed, were the nobles by Edward's vehemence and passion, that not

a single voice was raised in the duke's favour.

Yet Clarence defended himself courageously and well, and produced a strong impression upon his auditors. Energetically denying the accusations brought against him by the king, he denounced the queen and the Duke of Gloucester as his mortal enemies, and the secret contrivers of this scheme for his destruction.

His defence, however, as had been foreseen, proved unavailing, and when he gazed around at the noble assemblage at the close of his eloquent address, all looks were averted from him. He was found guilty, condemned to death, and sentence pronounced upon him by the Duke of Buckingham.

But Edward objected to a public execu-

tion, and it was thought, from the reluctance thus manifested by the king, that he would pardon his unfortunate brother.

Perhaps the duke himself entertained some such expectation. The firmness he had displayed throughout the trial never deserted him, and he heard his sentence with composure.

With a haughty step he marched from Westminster Hall to the barge that was waiting to convey him back to the Tower, and was wholly unmoved by the cries of the populace.

But when he was alone in his prison-chamber in the Bowyer's Tower, his courage deserted him. He then felt how vain it was to struggle against his enemies.

Not one of those whom he had favoured, and helped to raise to greatness, had spoken

in arrest of judgment—not one would plead for him—while some, he felt sure, would harden the king's heart against him.

His sole hope rested upon Jane. If any one could save him, she could. Convinced of this, he sent for Sir Robert Brackenbury, who, he thought, had a friendly feeling towards him, and besought him to despatch a messenger to her with a letter which he had prepared, and the lieutenant complied with the request.

Instead of writing an answer, Jane came in person, accompanied, as before, by Malbouche. The expression of her countenance was calculated to revive the duke's hopes. Brackenbury was present at the interview.

“I had not waited for your letter, my lord,” she said, “to implore a remission of

your sentence from the king, and I trust your life will be spared. You will be banished for a time to Ireland——”

“That is nothing!” cried Clarence, joyfully. “I can endure a long exile with patience, but I cannot meet death with the fortitude I expected. Oh, how much I owe you, madame!”

“I deem it right to inform your highness,” said Jane, “that the Duke of Gloucester has been striving to obtain a warrant for your secret execution; but I do not think, after my representations to his majesty, that he will succeed.”

“Heaven confound the fratricide and murderer! He is worse than Cain!” exclaimed Clarence, furiously. “He seeks to slay me, that he may mount the throne

himself. Is it possible Edward does not perceive his aim?"

"His majesty can only see one thing at a time, your highness," remarked Malbouche.

"He will find out his mistake when it is too late," said Clarence. "The queen, too, will regret her misplaced confidence in the dissembling villain."

"Send back his butt of malmsey, my lord," said Malbouche. "It is still here, I see."

"Ay, and the sight of it disturbs me!" cried Clarence. "I have not tasted, nor will I taste, the contents of the cask. Take it hence, I pray you, Sir Robert."

"Heed not this fool's advice, my lord!" said Brackenbury. "You will be glad of the wine anon."

“ ‘Tis no fool’s advice, as his highness will find,” said the jester.

“ Well, to-morrow the cask shall be removed, if his highness desires it,” rejoined Brackenbury.

“ To-morrow !” ejaculated Malbouche. “ Who knows what may happen before to-morrow ?”

“ Dost think the butt will be emptied, knave ?” said the lieutenant.

“ I know not what to think,” rejoined the jester. “ But strange qualms come o’er me when I look at it.”

“ I must now take leave of your highness,” said Jane. “ I shall continue to watch over your safety.”

“ I like not to say farewell for ever, madame,” rejoined the duke, in a despondent

tone. “But I have a foreboding we shall never meet again in this world.”

“Dismiss the thought,” said Jane. “Your enemies shall not triumph over you, if I can prevent them.”

“Beware of yonder cask,” said Malbouche. “That is my parting counsel to your highness.”

Jane and the others then went forth, and the duke was once more left to his melancholy reflections.

Before Jane and the lieutenant reached the Tower stairs, near which the barge was moored, they encountered Sir William Catesby, the Duke of Gloucester’s chief confidant.

He had just landed from a covered boat, and was accompanied by two stalwart but repulsive-looking attendants.

To Jane, Catesby's appearance at this juncture seemed ominous of ill; and Brackenbury's countenance grew sombre as he noticed his ill-omened attendants. Malbouche absolutely shuddered at the sight of them.

"Have you any business with me, Sir William?" inquired the lieutenant, as Catesby came up.

"Very important business, Sir Robert," replied the other, in accents distinctly heard by Jane and her companion. "I bring you a warrant for the immediate execution of the Duke of Clarence. 'Tis the king's pleasure that the execution be done in secret. More anon."

With this, he delivered the warrant to Brakenbury, who bowed as he received it.

At the same moment, an irrepressible cry from Jane attracted the attention of Catesby's sinister attendants, and they both turned their sullen faces towards her.

X.

SHOWING IN WHAT MANNER THE DUKE OF CLARENCE WAS
PUT TO DEATH.

“THOUGH I have a warrant for this secret execution, I like it not,” remarked Brakenbury, as he stood with Catesby near the entrance to the lieutenant’s lodgings. “It savours of a murder, and I would rather have no hand in it.”

“It must appear that the duke has died a natural death,” rejoined Catesby. “Miles Forrest and Swartmoor, the two men I have

brought with me, will do the deed well, and give you no trouble. But since you dislike the business, leave it to me. Give me the keys of the Bowyer's Tower, and order the gaoler not to go there till to-morrow morning."

"Right glad am I to be relieved of a duty so unpleasant," said Brakenbury. "For a mountain of gold I would not have such a crime upon my conscience. If I understand aright, the duke is allowed to choose the manner of his death?"

"Even so," replied Catesby. "But methinks 'twere best not to give him the choice. I have my own idea of an easy end, and that I shall now put in practice."

"Would that the matter could be delayed!" exclaimed the compassionate lieutenant.

“That were impolitic. When Louis was consulted by our own king about the imprisonment of the Duke of Clarence, the shrewd French monarch replied, in a verse from Lucan :

Tolle moras, semper nocuit differe paratis.

Delay not when you are ready to act. That is my own maxim.”

“But the duke is unprepared,” said Brackenbury. “He must not be cut off in his sin. I will take his confessor, Father Lambert, to him.”

“I object not to the confessor,” rejoined Catesby; but my plan must not be marred.”

“Tell me naught of your plan, and then I cannot interfere with it,” said the lieutenant. “Enter my lodgings, I pray you, and take Forrest and Swartmoor with you.

'Twere best they should not be seen about.
On my return, you shall have the keys of
the prison, and all else you may re-
quire."

"No need of haste," rejoined Catesby.
"Nothing will be done before midnight."

"The deed befits the hour," observed
Brakenbury.

He then proceeded towards Saint Peter's
Chapel in quest of Father Lambert, while
Catesby called to his men, and took them
into the lieutenant's lodgings.

Clarence was pacing to and fro within
his prison-chamber, in a very agitated state
of mind, when the door was unlocked, and
Brackenbury entered with Father Lambert,
who was well known to the duke, and,
indeed, acted as his confessor.

Extending his arms over the illustrious prisoner, who bent reverently before him, Father Lambert exclaimed :

“The saints be with you, my son.”

Then, regarding him earnestly, he added, “I trust I find you resigned to Heaven’s holy will.”

“My sufferings are severe, father,” replied the duke; “but I strive to bear them patiently. I thank you for this visit. Your exhortations will greatly comfort me.”

“My son,” said Father Lambert, solemnly, “I have come to help you to prepare for death.”

“Is it so near at hand?” demanded Clarence, reading in the lieutenant’s looks a confirmation of the dread announcement.

"Alas ! my lord, I can give you no hope," said Brakenbury. "The king is inexorable. Your enemies have prevailed!"

"But when am I to die, and how?" cried Clarence. "How many hours are left me ? Shall I behold another day?"

"My lord, I cannot answer the questions you put to me," rejoined Brakenbury. "'Tis certain you have not long to live. 'Twere best, therefore, to employ the little time remaining to you in preparation for eternity. To that end, I will leave Father Lambert with you. He will tarry as long as you list, and I promise you shall not be interrupted. May our blessed Lord absolve you of all your sins!"

He then went forth, leaving the duke alone with the priest.

The duke had much to confess, for nearly three hours had elapsed ere Father Lambert rejoined the lieutenant, who was waiting for him at the foot of the stone staircase.

“How left you his highness, holy father?” inquired Brakenbury, in a tone of deep solicitude.

“Truly and heartily contrite,” replied the priest. “I have given him full absolution.”

Greatly comforted by the prayers and exhortations of his ghostly counsellor, Clarence became more composed.

When night came on, he did not seek his couch, but while seated in a chair, sank into a profound slumber, from which he was aroused by the opening of the door.

The foremost of those who entered bore a lamp, that served to dispel the gloom and showed him three persons, whose appearance filled him with dismay.

Springing to his feet, he stood gazing at them in speechless terror. Their proceedings surprised him. He who bore the lamp set it down, while his ruffianly attendants placed a flagon and some silver goblets they had brought with them on a little oak table that stood in the centre of the room.

“Is it thou, Catesby?” demanded the duke, at length. “What brings thee here at this untimely hour?”

“I am come to have a carouse with your highness,” replied the other.

“Thou mockest me! Knowest thou not I am condemned to death?”

“ ‘Tis in the hope of cheering your last moments that I have thus intruded upon your highness,” rejoined Catesby. “ I have been informed by his Grace of Gloucester that your highness is well supplied with wine. Nay, by the mass ! I descry a butt of malmsey in yonder recess. We shall scarce finish it at a sitting ; but let us make the attempt.”

“ No more wine shall pass my lips,” said the duke ; “ but drink as much as you will, and let your men help you !”

“ I thank your highness for the offer,” rejoined Catesby. “ Knock off the lid of the cask, and fill the flagon,” he added to his attendants.

As the order was obeyed, the powerful odour of the wine pervaded the cham-

ber, and slightly assailed the duke's brain.

Filling a goblet to the brim, Catesby emptied it at a draught.

"By the mass! 'tis a rare wine!" he cried. "His highness said you might taste it," he added, filling a cup for each of his attendants.

"By Saint Dominick, I never drank such wine!" cried Miles Forrest. "It gladdens the heart."

"A cup of it would revive me were I at the last gasp!" exclaimed Swartmoor.

"You hear what they say, my lord?" cried Catesby, filling another goblet. "By Heaven! 'tis the true *elixir vitae*!—a sovereign remedy against earthly ills."

"Ay, that I'll warrant it!" cried Miles

Forrest. “Would my cup might be replenished !”

“And mine !” cried Swartmoor.

“Stint them not, I command you !” said the duke to Catesby. “Since the wine pleases you, my good fellows, drink of it lustily.”

“We should enjoy it far more an’ your highness would bear us company,” said Miles Forrest.

“Ay, marry, should we !” cried Swartmoor.

“Better wine was never drunk, that I maintain !” cried Catesby. “Were I to yield to my own inclinations, I should half empty yon cask.”

“And we could empty the other half,” said his attendants, laughing.

“ Set about the task,” cried Clarence.

“ But your highness must help us,” said Catesby.

“ I am prevented by a promise given to Father Lambert,” replied Clarence. “ When the wine was brought here, the good priest cautioned me against it, declaring that a draught of it would be fatal to me, and I promised not to touch it.”

“ The wine cannot be wholesome to us, and noxious to others,” said Catesby. “ But, be it what it may, I am resolved your highness shall taste it.”

“ You will not dare to use force, sir?” cried Clarence, alarmed by his tone and manner, as well as by the altered deportment of the two ruffians. “ I will resist to the death!”

"Resistance will be idle, my lord," said Catesby. "Take him to the cask," he added to his myrmidons. "If he will not drink plunge his head into the wine!"

"Off, villains!" cried Clarence, as they approached. "I guess your design. You would drown me."

They replied by a dreadful laugh, and seizing the duke, a terrible struggle commenced.

As they dragged him away, despite his desperate efforts to free himself, the table was upset, and the flagon and goblets rolled to the ground, with a hideous clatter.

Catesby did not stay to see the dreadful deed done. Snatching up the lamp, he rushed from the room, and stationed himself outside the door.

While standing there, he heard a terrible

splash, followed by half-stifled cries, mingled with imprecations from the murderers. Then all became silent.

Only for a few minutes.

A dreadful sound was next heard of a heavy body thrown on the floor.

Catesby waited no longer.

On re-entering the room, he saw an inert mass lying on the ground.

Beside it stood the two murderers.

The floor was flooded with wine. Wine, also, was streaming from the long locks of the victim, and from the upper part of his rich habiliments, showing how his death had been accomplished.

Next day, it was rumoured throughout London that the Duke of Clarence had died suddenly during the night in his prison-chamber in the Tower; and the circum-

stance seemed so suspicious, that loud murmurs of indignation were everywhere heard.

To allay the popular excitement, the body was exposed at Saint Paul's, that all might behold it. But no one was imposed upon by the exhibition, and the general opinion remained the same—that the duke had not come fairly by his end.

Within the fortress, these doubts were speedily converted into certainty ; for the unheard of manner of the illustrious prisoner's death could not be concealed from the gaolers.

Thenceforth, a superstitious horror brooded over the Bowyer's Tower. Always gloomy, it was now supposed to be haunted. Strange sounds were heard at dead of night in the chamber wherein the ill-fated Cl-

rence had met his mysterious death, and the hapless prisoners who succeeded him were scared almost out of their senses by fearful sights and sounds.

End of Book the Third.

Book the Fourth.

EDWARD THE FOURTH.

I.

HOW CAXTON PRESENTED A PSALTER TO THE KING.

DEEPLY, but unavailingly, did Edward reproach himself that he had not pardoned his unhappy brother. Perhaps, if Jane had seen the king after the meeting on the wharf with Catesby and the murderers, whose dark design she suspected, her prayers might have prevailed ; but, owing to Gloucester's management, she could not obtain access to his majesty till all was over, and Edward had a weight upon his soul

that could not be removed. His brother's blood seemed to cry out for vengeance against him, and he trembled lest the dark offence of which he had been guilty should be visited upon his children.

Only three months previously he had created Edward, his eldest son, still quite a boy, Prince of Wales, and Richard, the youngest, Duke of York. What if both should be taken from him, and his line cut off? He confessed he had provoked Heaven's wrath, and that the punishment would not be greater than he deserved.

To stifle his remorse, he again began to indulge in the excesses that had heretofore proved so baneful to him. But self-indulgence did not lighten his mental anguish, while it increased the bodily infirmities that had stolen upon him of late. His

temper became uncertain, and he frequently gave way to violent fits of passion.

This change in his habits, though regarded with much concern by those who loved him, was highly satisfactory to the darkly-designing Gloucester, as it held forth the promise that the life of the royal voluptuary would not be long.

But another passion, besides luxury, had taken possession of the king, from which he had hitherto been wholly free. Owing to the sums extorted from his subjects under various pretexts, the estates he had confiscated, and the large annual pension he received from Louis the Eleventh, he became very rich, and as his treasures increased, he grew covetous.

Hitherto lavish, if not generous, he was now avaricious and grasping. His gifts

were rare and no longer princely, and his courtiers complained of his excessive parsimony. The engaging qualities that had won for him the regard of the people in his earlier days, and aided him to establish the throne, had disappeared; but he was still affable, and retained his fondness for splendid attire. His unequalled symmetry of person was gone, and his strength enervated by indulgence. Jane had lost none of her influence over him, and exercised it beneficially as ever. The king's new-born avarice troubled her exceedingly, though not on her own account, but she had many suitors whom she desired to serve, and whom she was now obliged to send empty away.

Amongst those who presented themselves, one day, in the ante-chamber of her apart-

ments in the Palace of Westminster, was William Caxton.

This remarkable individual, who was the first to introduce the art of printing into England, was then turned seventy, but was still hale and hearty, and looked as if several years of active and useful life were still left him—as, indeed, they were, for he lived to be eighty-one.

Temperate in his habits, still capable of great mental and bodily exertion, plain in attire, austere in look, and sedate in manner, Caxton presented a striking contrast to the indolent and luxurious Edward, whose strength had been impaired, and whose beauty and personal symmetry had been destroyed, by continual excesses.

On the marriage of Margaret of York, Edward's sister, to Charles the Bold, Cax-

ton, who had been engaged in commercial pursuits in Holland and Flanders, was appointed to a place in the household of the duchess, and, by her command, translated and printed Raoul Lefèvre's "History of Troy."

Shortly afterwards he returned to his own country. Patronised by Lord Rivers, the queen's brother, and protected by the Bishop of Hereford, he established a printing-press in Westminster Abbey. Here was produced his renowned "Game of Chess," which enjoys the distinction of being the first book printed in England. Here, also, were printed many other books, among which were the poems of Chaucer; and the famous printer was still adding to his long list of marvellous works, when he pre-

sented himself, on the morning in question, in Jane's ante-chamber.

When Caxton's name was announced by the usher, Jane desired that he might be instantly admitted, and expressing her pleasure at seeing him, she presented him to the king, who was fortunately with her at the time.

Edward was seated in a fauteuil, propped up by cushions, with his foot on a tabouret, conversing with Malbouche, who stood beside him ; but he slightly raised himself as Caxton was brought forward, and, kneeling down, proffered him a small book.

“ Deign, sire,” he said, “ to accept this psalter, printed expressly for your own use. I regard it as the best specimen of my art, or I should not presume to offer it to your majesty.”

“ ‘Tis beautifully executed,” said Edward, taking the psalter from him, and motioning him to rise. “ You have achieved wonders, good Master Caxton.”

“ The art is only in its infancy, my liege,” replied the printer, modestly. “ Wonders, no doubt, will be achieved by those who come after me.”

“ Meantime, you have done much,” said Jane, to whom the king had handed the book, and who seemed greatly pleased with it. “ This great invention,” she said, “ which you have so successfully carried out, will be one of the memorable events of his majesty’s reign.”

“ Ay, marry, we have reason to feel proud of you, good Master Caxton,” said Edward. “ When my sister, the Duchess of Burgundy, wrote to me that you had

printed for her Raoul Lefèvre's ‘History of Troy,’ I did not comprehend that a greater feat had been accomplished than any deed of arms, and that you had conquered a kingdom hitherto unknown. Since then I have watched your progress with much interest, and it has been matter of the highest satisfaction to me that you have chosen our capital, and not a foreign city, as the scene of your important labours. My brother, Lord Rivers, hath often spoken of you in terms of the warmest commendation ; and I have fully intended, though I have too long neglected to do so, to visit your printing-press in Westminster Abbey.”

“Why not go there now, my liege?” cried Jane. “Of all things, I should like to see this wonder-working press!”

“ ‘Twill, indeed, be a great gratification if your majesty will so far honour me,” said Caxton, delighted by the proposition ; “ but I am wholly unprepared.”

“ No preparation is necessary,” said the king. “ If the visit be postponed, it may never be made.”

“ Very true, sire,” said Malbouche. “ Your majesty constantly forms good resolutions, but rarely keeps them. ‘ Tis too much trouble,’ or ‘ Another time will be best.’ An excuse is never wanting.”

“ I have had so much fatigue, that I am now glad of repose,” said the king.

“ I do not wonder at it, my liege,” remarked Caxton. “ Though, for my own part, nothing wearies so much as idleness. But then I have not the same excuse as your majesty.”

"In sooth, I have no excuse," said Edward. "My health suffers from want of exercise, and my physicians counsel me to spend five or six hours each day on horseback."

"And so do I, my liege," observed Jane. "You must, perforce, return to Windsor, and hunt daily in the forest."

"And forego grand banquets for a time," added Malbouche. "I am the best physician."

"Wouldst starve me, knave?" cried Edward, testily.

"No, my liege," replied the jester. "But I would limit your repast to a dozen dishes, and never allow it to exceed twenty. Nor would I suffer you to consume more than three flasks of that good wine of Chalosse,

sent you by Louis of France, of which your majesty is so fond."

Caxton could scarce repress a smile.

"Faith, the wine is so good, that I am tempted to drink too much of it!" remarked the king.

"A war with France would prove a certain cure for all your majesty's ailments," said Caxton.

"I must not have recourse to it," rejoined the king. "But let us go see your printing-press."

The party then left the palace by a private door, and proceeded to the abbey.

II.

THE VISIT TO THE CAXTON PRINTING-PRESS.

THE chamber in which stood the first printing-press established in England was situated at the back of the abbey near the cloisters, and had once been a chapel, whence originated the designation still applied to a printer's work-room.

In this antique apartment, which was built of stone, and had a groined roof, and pointed windows filled with stained glass, was set up the cumbrous machine that had

already wrought so many wonders. Near it were ranged a few frames of the simplest and most primitive construction, furnished with cases containing the handsome black letter used by Caxton.

On one side was a large oak table, piled high with folios bound in vellum, and some books of smaller size, all being products of the Caxton press.

Behind the table, in a deep recess, stood a desk and stool—the desk being covered with papers, and the stool occupied by a Franciscan friar, who was evidently compiling some historical work from the documents placed before him.

Three apprentices of very sedate deportment, and attired in jerkins of coarse brown serge, were at work, picking out letters from the cases with great deliberation.

An air of extreme quietude pervaded the chamber.

On the entrance of the royal party the apprentices suspended their work, and the monk ceased writing, and withdrew into the depths of the recess. But Jane noticed him, and a feeling of uneasiness, for which she could scarcely account, came over her.

“How tranquil all seems here, good Master Caxton!” remarked Edward, as he looked around. “Yours must be an agreeable occupation since it can be thus conducted.”

“We are as quiet as if we were in a convent, my liege,” replied Caxton. “Nay, many holy men lend me aid. Friar Sylvius, who has left his desk, is compiling a portion of my *Polychronicon*.”

“To what does that work relate?” inquired Jane.

“When completed, 'twill be a chronicle of the chief events of his majesty's reign,” rejoined Caxton. “Father Sylvius is now preparing a narrative of the recent expedition to France, with an account of the treaty with King Louis.”

On hearing this, Edward expressed much satisfaction, and said he would question the friar anon, and, if need be, give him some information. Caxton then proceeded to explain the process of printing; and, to demonstrate it more clearly, caused a few lines to be set up, and pulled at the press, addressed to the *Dame de Beauté*. The sheet was respectfully presented by one of the apprentices to Jane, who bestowed a boon upon them.

The books, of which mention has been made as lying on the table, were next examined, and much admired by the king and his companion.

“ All these have been printed by me within the last few years,” said Caxton, as he displayed them. “ This is the ‘ Sayings of the Philosophers ;’ this is a translation of Ovid’s ‘ Book of Metamorphoses ;’ here are the ‘ Chronicles of England ;’ here is the ‘ History of Reynard the Fox ;’ here is ‘ Godfrey of Bouilloigne ;’ this is the ‘ Pilgrimage of the Soul ;’ and this is the ‘ Liber Festivalis.’ ”

“ A goodly collection, in truth, Master Caxton,” observed Edward, glancing at the volumes as they were handed to him. “ I am well acquainted with two of them, ‘ Godfrey of Bouilloigne,’ and ‘ Reynard the

Fox.' Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' I have read in the original Latin, and I hope to profit by the 'Sayings of the Philosophers.' You recommended to me the 'Pilgrimage of the Soul,'" he added, to Jane; "but I have not yet read the work."

"I have studied it carefully," said Jane; "and can pronounce it an excellent treatise. But your majesty has read all Chaucer's poems, which have likewise been collected by Master Caxton."

"Ay, marry!" rejoined Edward; "I have read them with infinite delectation. But I will now say a word to Father Sylvius. Come with me," he added, to Jane.

Thereupon he entered the recess, at the further end of which stood the friar, with his hood partially drawn over his face.

Fancying that the king did not require his attendance, Caxton remained in the chapel.

As the king approached, Father Sylvius bowed reverently, but did not raise his hood, so that Jane could not discover his features. But her uneasiness increased, and when he spoke, his voice vibrated to the inmost recesses of her breast.

“We learn from Master Caxton that you are writing a chronicle of our reign, holy father,” said Edward. “We hope the record will be faithful.”

“I have merely undertaken to describe your majesty’s expedition to France,” replied the friar. “I am so far qualified for the task, in that I was present at the time. My sole regret is, that I have not a battle, like that of Azincour, to recount.”

“ You may yet have your wish,” rejoined the king. “ Our cousin Louis seems inclined to violate the treaty of Picquigny. If he continues to trifle with us in regard to the marriage of the Dauphin with our daughter, the Lady Elizabeth, we shall call him to a strict account; and if we again invade France, thou may’st rest assured we will not return without having taken from him two of his duchies.”

“ Sire,” said the Franciscan, in a deep, low voice, “ no second invasion will take place !”

“ Ha ! what mean’st thou ?” exclaimed Edward, sharply. “ Dost pretend to pry into the future ?”

“ No, my liege,” replied Father Sylvius. “ But the opportunity of successfully invading France is gone. You cannot count

upon the support of the Flemings, who are now attached to the interests of Louis. Charles the Bold is dead. The Duke of Bretagne is afflicted with an illness that renders him incapable of any great enterprise. Your new allies, the kings of Spain and Portugal, will not assist you. It follows, therefore, that if you undertake another war with France, it must be alone and unaided—and this you will not do."

"Thou art mistaken, father," cried Edward. "Let Louis provoke me, and he shall feel my wrath—feel it in every vein in his heart. I will strike a blow that he cannot resist."

"That you might do so, my liege, were you strong, as of old, I doubt not," said Father Sylvius. "But you may find, when you most need them, that your energies are

departed. Think not of war, but make your peace with Heaven. It may be," he added, with impressive solemnity, "that you will not have too much time allowed you for repentance."

With difficulty, Edward restrained his wrath, but he contented himself with saying, with forced calmness :

"Know'st thou not that thy talk is treasonable, and touches thy life?"

"That consideration will [not deter me from speaking freely, sire," rejoined the Franciscan. "I deem it my duty to warn your majesty that your time may not be long on earth. 'Twere best, therefore, that the interval should be passed in penitence and prayer. Make atonement if you have done wrong or injustice."

"Have I done thee wrong, that thou

dar'st address me thus?" demanded Edward.

"The greatest wrong that man can endure," replied the monk. "Thou hast taken my wife from me."

And throwing back his hood, he displayed the features of Alban Shore.

Even Edward recoiled at the sight of the man he had so deeply injured.

"Let us go hence, my liege," said Jane.
"His looks terrify me."

Shore was again about to speak, but the king commanded him, in a stern, menacing tone, to be silent.

"I spare thee, though thou dost richly deserve death," said Edward. "But put a bridle henceforth on thy tongue, or no mercy shall be shown thee."

"Sire, give heed to my words," said

Shore. “I am not distraught, as you may imagine, nor have I any desire of vengeance. But I warn you that the evil day is at hand. Thou, also, art warned!” he added to Jane.

“Spare him, my liege! spare him, for my sake!” she cried, seeing that the king was about to order the imprudent man’s arrest.

Though highly incensed, Edward yielded, and went forth with her. Calming himself by a great effort, he spoke with as much composure to Caxton as if nothing had occurred to disturb him, and shortly afterwards quitted the chapel with his attendants.

END OF VOL. II.

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